

“NOBODY CAN GIVE FROM AN EMPTY VESSEL”:

A QUALITATIVE STUDY ON SELF-CARE

FOR WOMEN ACTIVISTS IN

COUNSELING PSYCHOLOGY

by

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## ABSTRACT

Women psychologists have conducted social justice work since the beginning of psychology, when women were denied access to education. The efforts of first- and second-generation women psychologists paved the way for present day women in counseling psychology. Today's female psychologists and graduate students in counseling psychology encounter numerous challenges as female professors, clinicians, researchers, and students. Added stress includes challenges associated with social justice activism, which oftentimes is work that occurs on a voluntary basis without financial compensation. Despite encountering many challenges in activist work, women in counseling psychology willingly continue to serve their communities and universities through social justice work using methods of self-care. The role of self-care is vital for professionals, given the threat of burnout and compassion fatigue in mental health disciplines. The following study explores the role of self-care for female psychologists and graduate students in counseling psychology who conduct social justice work. Seventeen participants, consisting of female psychologists and graduate students in counseling psychology, were interviewed about self-care. All participants self-identified as social justice activists. Using a grounded theory approach, qualitative methods were incorporated to analyze transcripts of semistructured interviews to create a conceptual model of self-care related to female activists. Results add to the understanding of social justice work by describing activism as an ongoing process that builds from efforts of

previous activists, a process that gives back to the activist in meaningful and purposeful ways, and a process that involves emotional investment. Results also provide a deeper understanding of self-care, which is described as a learning process that changes throughout the lifespan. Self-care is rooted in the idea of knowing, which is understanding one's needs at a specific moment and choosing self-care that best fit those specific needs. Participants identified internal and external types of self-care addressing physical, relational, spiritual, and mindful needs. Four themes emerged from the data to describe the relationship of self-care in the lives of activist women. These themes include Relational Support, Influences, Challenges, and Strategies. The relationships among all four themes are described within the conceptual framework of an all-encompassing theme, activist lifestyle. A visual diagram illustrating this conceptual model is provided.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT .....	iii
LIST OF TABLES .....	vii
LIST OF FIGURES .....	viii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....	ix
Chapters	
I INTRODUCTION .....	1
First-Generation Women Psychologists .....	7
Second-Generation Women Psychologists .....	13
Third-Generation Women Psychologists .....	17
Multiculturalism in Counseling Psychology .....	25
Call for Social Justice .....	30
Challenges to Conducting Social Justice Work .....	37
Self-Care .....	38
Rationale for Study .....	41
II METHODS .....	43
Paradigm Underpinning the Research .....	43
Research Design .....	46
Researcher as Instrument .....	48
Researcher Reflectivity .....	49
Subjectivity .....	54
Participants .....	55
Sampling Procedures .....	58
Recruitment .....	59
Researcher Role and Relationship to Participants .....	60
Taking Leave .....	61
Sources of Data .....	61
Individual Interviews .....	62
Participant Observations .....	65
Reflective Journal .....	66

Data Analysis and Writing.....	68
Data Management .....	68
Data Analysis.....	70
Writing .....	73
III RESULTS .....	75
Overview.....	75
Types of Activism.....	76
Defining Activism.....	82
Challenges to Conducting Social Justice Work .....	89
Self-Care .....	97
Theme 1: Relational Support .....	104
Theme 2: Influences.....	114
Theme 3: Challenges to Practicing Self-Care .....	122
Theme 4: Strategies.....	129
Relationships Among Four Themes of Self-Care .....	137
Activist Lifestyle.....	139
Conclusion .....	143
IV DISCUSSION.....	147
Summary of Findings.....	147
Interpretation of Data.....	151
Implications of Findings .....	155
Limitations .....	157
Future Directions .....	159
Appendices	
A: FEMALE MEMBERS OF AMERICAN PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION (APA) OR WOMEN LISTED IN PSYCHOLOGY IN <i>AMERICAN MEN OF SCIENCE (AMS)</i> BY 1966 .....	162
B: DEMOGRAPHICS FORM.....	164
C: RECRUITMENT FLYER.....	166
D: INFORMED CONSENT .....	168
REFERENCES .....	171

## LIST OF TABLES

### Tables

1: Participants' Demographics .....	74
2: Self-Care Is Multidimensional.....	144



## LIST OF FIGURES

### Figures

1: Theme One: Relational Support .....	144
2: Theme Two: Influences .....	145
3: Theme Three: Challenges .....	145
4: Theme Four: Strategies .....	145
5: Four Themes of Self-Care.....	146
6: McCadden Model of Self-Care for Women Activists in Counseling Psychology .....	146

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I want to thank my parents, siblings, family members, and friends for their constant support. Leaving home to pursue a doctoral education was a choice I made never expecting it to last nine years. Late night phone calls with my mother about overcoming fears and trusting the Lord were the perfect tools I needed to restore inner confidence. Discussions about financial planning with my father helped to ease bitter and anxious thoughts pertaining to lack of funding. To my family and friends who helped me to focus

on the end goal, I thank you.

The path to becoming a counseling psychologist was challenging, in my experience. One of my admirable professors, Dr. Cindy Solliday McRoy, said that, “You don’t have to be crazy to *see* a psychologist. You just have to be crazy to *become* a psychologist.” Classes and clinical work require time, energy, and finances. Add that to a schedule of teaching undergraduate students, some of whom expect an A despite their lack of attendance or efforts, or conducting research for a professor. Then of course, students must complete their own research projects, pass preliminary exams that weigh in on whether or not they are going to stay in their program; and if that’s not enough stress, add in the requirement of paying approximately \$500 to apply for a twelve-month internship. Unlucky souls who do not match are stuck in school another year with added pressure to reapply for internship. All of this just to *become* a psychologist. After graduation, we are likely to find a one-year job that pays the same salary as the one earned on internship as a result of state laws and licensure criteria. Do not forget to whop out another thousand dollars to pay for the national exam, in addition to any state exam fees, licensure fees, and fees for study materials. Don’t pass? No license for you. Do not worry; Dr. Phil does not have an active license, and he is doing pretty well.

These are just the logistics of becoming a counseling psychologist. Additional challenges are involved in the learning process, such as relationships with supervisors, clients, students, and one’s own self-growth. Here are a few examples of what students may encounter on their paths to becoming psychologists:

- 1) Feeling like a disappointment to clients after realizing you cannot solve their problems.

- 2) Encountering a supervisor whose shortcomings go unrecognized by colleagues but cause self-doubt despite six years of clinical achievements.
- 3) Struggling to gain funding covering more than rent despite being told that your program will not support you because fourth-year students are too far along in the program for program assistantships.
- 4) Watching countless students in fourth, fifth, and later years in the program receive assistantships covering tuition and living expenses.
- 5) Feeling undervalued by certain faculty members.
- 6) Finding an amazing academic mentor from another program and spending quality time together outside of school. Quality time turns into fond memories, an increased admiration towards the mentor, and an internal awareness of your enhanced self-efficacy but only to be betrayed by her/him after a fall-out, and then blamed. After all, pathologizing the student rather than the professor is the easier route. As a result, amidst all of your educational responsibilities, you find yourself falling into pieces.

Pieces. As graduate students, we recognize all the pieces that make up the complex structures of becoming talented psychologists. We do not drop out of school because we recognize pieces within us that celebrate client resilience. We recognize pieces of ourselves that will make positive changes for clients and their families. We recognize the vital pieces of ourselves that will not stand for social injustices but instead work to end social inequalities. We recognize a need to continue the works of Maya

Angelou and all other inspirational leaders who came before us. Therefore, we find the pieces within ourselves to stand again. This skill is not intuitive, so how do we find that piece that reminds us we are okay? By taking care of ourselves.

My study explores the role of self-care in lives of women in counseling psychology who identify as social justice activists. They ranged in ages from 24 to 66. I identified pieces of myself in every one of them. Maybe it was the shared history of oppression or the shared interest in psychology and activism that formed such connections. Whether it was bonding over conversations about Bella Abzug, discussing experiences of volunteering at a university women's resource center, or relating about shared experiences of feeling devalued by faculty, a piece of myself connected to a piece of every participant. I hope the findings of this study will validate the hardships encountered by readers in activism and academe, and provide useful resources to overcome challenges found within advocacy work conducted in academic environments and communities. I hope readers who are struggling in academic environments never turn their backs on learning, but also recognize that they are not a sponge to clean messes. We are all human beings deserving of as much value as the next student, early career professional, or tenure-track professor. A wise woman, Dr. Michelle Dorsey, once said, "The degree doesn't make the therapist." I believe it does not make the person, either. I thank God for the person I am, was born as, and will become.

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION AND REVIEW OF LITERATURE

“Caring for myself is not self-indulgence, it is self-preservation, and that is an act of political warfare.” (Lorde, 1988, p. 131)

American women psychologists have advocated for equal opportunities in education and research since the 1890s (Scarborough, 1992; Scarborough & Furumoto, 1987) and continue to advocate for social justice causes to the present day (Tiefer, 1991, 2009). An examination of the historical accounts of women psychologists illustrated their perseverance in battling gender discrimination and prejudice within the field of psychology. However, it remains difficult to analyze such perseverance because female psychologists have been excluded from historical narratives of the field of psychology, despite making significant contributions (Furumoto & Scarborough, 1986; Scarborough & Furumoto, 1987). The contributions of first-generation female psychologists include advocating for and obtaining rights to education and admittance into professional psychology organizations and challenging outcomes of studies conducted by men that perpetuated gender stereotypes, thus devaluing women (Milar, 2000; Scarborough & Furumoto, 1987). These women generated opportunities for the second generation of female psychologists to the extent that, by the time second-generation female psychologists sought educations, obtaining a graduate degree in psychology was not an unprecedented event (Furumoto & Scarborough, 1986; Scarborough & Furumoto, 1987).

The demographics of the second generation of female psychologists differed from the first generation. Whereas first-generation female psychologists came from White middle class Protestant families (Furumoto & Scarborough, 1986; Scarborough & Furumoto, 1987), second-generation female psychologists included women from poverty, some of whom were of Catholic or Jewish descent, as well as African Americans (Johnston & Johnson, 2008). Therefore, in addition to sexism, the second generation of female psychologists also faced racial and religious discrimination (Johnston & Johnson, 2008). They were excluded from joining professional committees such as the Emergency Committee in Psychology of 1939, which was formed so that (male) psychologists could use their training and experiences in ways to help their country in a time of need (Capshew & Laszlo, 1986; Scarborough & Furumoto, 1987; Schwesinger, 1943). Female psychologists who wanted to support their country were told to “keep the home fires burning, that tradition favored the services of men in time of war” (Schwesinger, 1943, p. 298). Nevertheless, the second generation of women psychologists made significant scientific contributions to the field of psychology (see Gibson, 1991; Heidbreder, 1933) and challenged misconceptions about women (see Hiedbreader, 1927; Hollingworth, 1914, 1918). As they continued to face gender and racial discrimination, second-generation female psychologists convened to form professional organizations to support one another and the needs of female clients, students, academics, and clinicians (Capshew & Laszlo, 1986; Russo & Dumont, 1997; Schwesinger, 1943; Tiefer, 1991, 1992). This generation created organizational support systems that offered the next generation of women psychologists a platform to continue their efforts in working towards social change.

Defining the third generation of female psychologists was complicated, given the lack of parameters between second- and third-generation psychologists, and also recognizing that second-generation psychologists are still active in the field. Given that Johnston and Johnson (2008) defined second-generation women psychologists as those individuals who earned a doctorate in psychology between 1906 and 1945, one could suggest that the third-generation female psychologists are those individuals who obtained a doctor degree after 1945.

Another method of exploring third-generation female psychologists is by identifying patterns of research topics conducted by female psychologists within the past decade. For example, physical and mental health, violence, and gender attitudes/roles were the top three themes of publications between 2000 and 2004 in the *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, one of the leading journals representing feminist research (Stake, 2009; White, 2005). Additional themes that were commonly addressed in more recent publications of *Psychology of Women Quarterly* include self-objectification, gender bias, career/academic, lesbian issues, women of color, research methodology, and feminism (Stake, 2009). The historical trend of feminism emerging within the field of psychology provided another platform for discussing third-generation female psychologists.

Feminist psychologists began critiquing the content and methodologies of psychology during the late 1960s (Eagly & Riger, 2014; Rutherford & Pettit, 2015). These actions occurred approximately 10 years prior to the time frame cited as the birth of feminist psychology (Chrisler & Smith, 2004). Eagly and Riger (2014) argued that “feminist discourse was part of a cascade of influences that brought important changes in the ways that science is understood and practiced in psychology” (p. 685). Furthermore,



Eagly and Riger (2014) identified feminist critiques of psychology that included androcentric bias, the overuse of male research participants and lack of female participants, generalizing lab experiments to natural settings, and the underuse and acceptance of qualitative methodology. This general trend of feminist psychologists openly expressing their concerns about the field of psychology may suggest third-wave psychologists have been more confident and less intimidated about advocating for women within a male-centered field.

A significant theme that emerged in the 1980s for psychologists is the increased focus on multiculturalism and developing multicultural competencies (Buboltz, Miller, & Williams, 1999; Edwards & Pedrotti, 2008; Sue, et al., 1982). Following the publication of the *Multicultural Guidelines* (APA, 2003), psychologists Elizabeth Vera and Suzette Speight (2003) emphasized the importance, when discussing multicultural competencies, of including *advocacy* as a vital component to one's commitment to social justice. As a result of their efforts to bring attention to the importance of social advocacy, psychologists, specifically counseling psychologists, have since embraced social justice as an integral component to enhance multicultural competencies (Arredondo & Perez, 2003; Ivey & Collins, 2003; Vera & Speight, 2003).

In the *Handbook for Social Justice in Counseling Psychology*, Fouad, Gerstein, and Toporek (2006) suggested that social justice work is based on the belief that individuals of all genders, ethnicities, sexual orientations, ability statuses, and religious backgrounds receive an equal distribution of resources. Furthermore, social justice involves counselors and mental health professionals “actively working to change social institutions, political and economic systems, and governmental structures that perpetuate

unfair practices, structures, and policies in terms of accessibility, resource distribution, and human rights” (Fouad, Gerstein, & Toporek, 2006, p. 1). Female counseling psychologists are engaged in social justice research pertaining to training (e.g., Beer, Greene, Spanierman, & Todd, 2012; Toporek & McNally, 2006), interventions in schools (e.g., Davidson, Waldo, & Adams, 2006), and international affairs (Gerstein & Kirkpatrick, 2006; Horne & Mathews, 2006). As social justice activists, female counseling psychologists are also engaged in hands-on activist work (Tang, et al., 2012; Toporek, Gerstein, Fouad, Roysircar, & Israel, 2006).

However, conducting social justice work has been demonstrated to cause emotional exhaustion, harassment from individuals with opposing viewpoints, and problems at work (Bradley, Werth, Hastings, & Pierce, 2012; Dinsmore, Chapman, & McCollum, 2000; Kiselica & Robinson, 2001). Advocates conducting antiracist work experienced conflicts in vocational settings and in relationships with significant partners (Smith & Redington, 2010). Graduate students in counseling psychology programs are also engaged in social justice advocacy (Singh, Hofsess, Boyer et al., 2010), which is not surprising, given the increasing emphasis placed on social justice in counseling psychology. Graduate students conducting advocacy work often spend a significant amount of time and energy on work that is often ignored or not rewarded, which may cause frustration and hopelessness (Goodman, et al., 2004). These data strongly underscore the need for psychologists and graduate students conducting social justice work to engage in self-care.

Presently, no standard definition of *self-care* exists in the literature, given the various perspectives of self-care among a diverse range of healthcare professions

(Godfrey et al., 2011; Pakenham, 2014). Through a review of 139 definitions of self-care, Godfrey et al. (2011) identified several key components. These included intentional care for one's self throughout the lifespan, promoting health, and maintaining wellbeing (Godfrey et al., 2011). Self-care has been argued as "an ethical imperative" for psychologists' competency (Wise, Hersh, & Gibson, 2012, p. 487), as psychologists and psychology graduate students often experience distress and impairment (Cushway, 1992; O'Connor, 2001; Sherman & Thelen, 1998) and face stressors causing burnout, vicarious trauma (Figley, 1995, 2002; Harrison & Westwood, 2009), emotional exhaustion, and fatigue (Mahoney, 1997). Although much literature has been directed at identifying self-care strategies for psychologists, less research has focused on graduate students in psychology training programs (Pakenham, 2014) and self-care methods for individuals conducting social justice work.

Studies addressing self-care strategies for activists working towards social change focus on individuals participating in specific types of activism, such as efforts to eliminate mascots or logos depicting a specific heritage (Steinfeldt et al., 2012); efforts to challenge racism (Smith & Redington, 2010); or working on behalf of specific populations, such as rape victims (Wasco, Campbell, & Clark, 2002). Additional studies are needed to understand the meaning of self-care for psychologists and graduate students in counseling psychology engaged in social justice advocacy and strategies for effective self-care.

The purpose of this study was to conceptualize the meaning of self-care through perspectives of women counseling psychologists and female graduate students engaged in social justice advocacy. This study aimed to identify self-care methods employed by

women psychologists and female graduate students in counseling psychology who conduct social justice work. This study contributed to the literature by identifying self-protective methods addressing challenges that accompany activism. First, a literature review is presented that illustrates the history of first-, second-, and third-generation female psychologists. Next, literature is presented on multiculturalism and social justice in counseling psychology. The efforts of social justice activists in counseling psychology are reviewed, followed by the challenges associated with advocacy work. Lastly, literature is reviewed on self-care for psychologists, graduate students, and social justice advocates.

### First-Generation Women Psychologists

Scarborough and Furumoto (1987) composed a list of 25 women whom they identified as first-generation female psychologists based on their listing in Cattell's (1906) *American Men of Science* directory or their membership in the American Psychological Association by the year 1906 (See *Appendix A*.) It is important to note that these women are not parallel to first- wave/second-wave feminists. These women came from White, privileged middle-class backgrounds in which education was highly valued by both society and their parents (Furumoto & Scarborough, 1986; Scarborough and Furumoto, 1987). The median age for these women in 1906 was 39.5 years (Furumoto & Scarborough, 1986). Family expectations for seeking higher education, financial needs to support themselves and family, and an interest in the field of psychology were the reasons that led to these women's desire to pursue educations. Ten of the women earned their degree from a women's college at Wellesley, Vassar, Wilson, or Smith (Furumoto

& Scarborough, 1986), and 19 of the 24 who attended graduate school obtained a doctoral degree in psychology (Scarborough and Furumoto, 1987). The most common occupation for these women was teaching in women's colleges, where they shared common interests and served as both role models and mentors to support one another during a time period that lacked role models or future successors (Scarborough and Furumoto, 1987). It may be hypothesized that teaching in women's colleges was a form of self-care, given the support and mentorship available in such environments. For example, Patricia Palmieri (1983) indicated that women faculty working at Wellesley College between 1895 through 1920, which included Drs. Mary Whiton Calkins, Eleanor Gamble, Ethel Puffer, and Mary Alice Willcox, formed emotional ties of friendship and loyalty involving socializing and living together, co-authoring publications, leaving property to one another in wills, and caring for one another during terminal illnesses. Palmieri stated, "They (female Wellesley faculty) formed a world whose symbols were respect for learning, love of nature, devotion to social activism, a fondness for wit and humor, frequent emotional exchanges, and loyalty to Wellesley and to each other," (p. 203). Being outdoors was "therapeutic" for these women (Palmieri, 1983, p. 201). When they were not enjoying the scenery on the Wellesley campus, they gathered during summers in New Hampshire, Maine, and Massachusetts, where they were "never so happy as when they were mountain climbing, hiking, or bicycling," (Palmieri, 1983, p. 202). Working at a women's college provided women with support, emotional bonds, and social gatherings with women of similar backgrounds, along with opportunities to relax in nature.

First-generation women psychologists faced obstacles that were characteristic of

their era. In 19th-century America, the idea of a “woman’s sphere” was a central theme that pressured women to conform to gender roles such as marriage and motherhood (Cott, 1977) and espoused the virtues of submissiveness and domesticity (Welter, 1966). Nine of the women married and eight of those women had children (Furumoto & Scarborough, 1986). These women faced challenges of balancing work and home responsibilities, and those who sought a higher education faced institutional policies set in place to discriminate against women (Scarborough & Furumoto, 1987). For example, married women were not allowed to work at academic institutions that had previously hired their husbands.

Additionally, the first women entering the field of psychology did not have female role models, as psychology was an emerging male-dominated field that valued masculine characteristics such as competitiveness and dominance (Scarborough, 1992; Scarborough & Furumoto, 1987). Identifying a university that permitted women to study psychology at the graduate level proved challenging, as the study of psychology was not offered by many institutions at this time, and opportunities were even more limited for women. For example, after Mary Whiton Calkins obtained permission to attend two classes at Harvard, she encountered opposition from the Harvard president, who believed women and men should be educated separately. She was not allowed to attend lectures until after her father wrote a petition on her behalf (Scarborough & Furumoto, 1987). Perhaps such experiences influenced Calkins’ choice to teach at Wellesley, where she was surrounded by other female faculty members, not necessarily in the field of psychology, but who understood such challenges of studying and working in higher education (Palmieri, 1983).

Margret Washburn held positions at Vassar and Wells Colleges, where she faced gender discrimination and was described as one of the “Dangerous Women” (as termed by the president of Vassar College), women who were identified as those who “rejoiced in the conflict of ideas” (Scarborough & Furumoto, 1987, p. 105). Her experiences illustrate how women hired to work at women’s colleges faced work limitations that included overwhelming teaching demands, a lack of resources for conducting research, and the obligation to participate in student affairs (Scarborough & Furumoto, 1987). Despite such obstacles, these women persevered and made significant contributions to the field of psychology.

Elizabeth Adams established the Department of Education at Smith College and published *Women Professional Workers* (Adams, 1921), a text exploring vocational opportunities for women. Mary Calkins established the first psychology lab at a women’s college and published two books and over 100 articles in the fields of both psychology and philosophy while teaching at Wellesley. According to Heidbreder (1972), Calkins’ major contribution to psychology was a system of self-psychology. She was the first woman to hold office in two national societies, the American Psychological Association (APA) and the American Philosophical Association (Scarborough & Furumoto, 1987).

Margaret Floy Washburn’s contributions to the field of psychology included writing a textbook called *The Animal Mind* (Washburn, 1917), conducting research and developing a theory of consciousness, and holding leadership positions in national organizations (Scarborough & Furumoto, 1987). In addition to having a supportive family background, Washburn’s education, employment, motivation, positive self-image, and ability to socialize with colleagues contributed to her achievements (Scarborough &

Furumoto, 1987). In 1894, Washburn became the first woman to receive a doctoral degree in psychology. She became president of the APA in 1921; and, in 1931, she became the second woman to be elected into the National Academy of Sciences, which was considered to be the United States' most distinguished scientific society at that time (Scarborough & Furumoto, 1987). The achievements of becoming the first women to work in academic institutions and hold positions in national organizations paved the way for more women to follow and provided female role models in male-dominated fields for the first time. As these women achieved recognition for their efforts and contributions, many of their colleagues began working for social justice causes.

Christine Ladd-Franklin was one of the most vocal psychologists of her time to challenge gender discrimination. As women began attending colleges and pursuing graduate training, she argued for equal education and challenged the barriers that interfered with women's abilities to advance their careers. She wrote numerous letters to the prominent British psychologist Edward B. Titchener, challenging his policy excluding women from his group of experimental psychologists, whose members often helped younger (male) professionals advance their careers (Milar, 2000; Scarborough & Furumoto, 1987). In her publications, Ladd-Franklin wrote candidly against the accepted idea that marriage was the only means by which a woman could provide for herself (Scarborough & Furumoto, 1987). She encouraged married women to protect their independence by not turning over their property to their husbands (Ladd-Franklin, 1896).

However, women with families who also worked outside the home faced additional challenges. As the director of the Institute for the Coordination of Women's Interests at Smith College in 1925, Ethel Puffer Howes used grant money provided by the



Laura Spelman Rockefeller Fund to create programs designed to decrease women's familial responsibilities so they could pursue career-related work. Examples include developing nursery schools and services that delivered meals to families (Scarborough & Furumoto, 1987). She also published articles in the *Atlantic Monthly* raising awareness about the false belief that women could not balance marriage and a career without difficulties (Howes 1922a, 1922b).

The efforts of Ethel Puffer Howes to help women balance work and families by decreasing the burdens of family responsibilities are just one example of self-care methods employed by women of this generation. It can be argued that self-care strategies of female psychologists included obtaining an education and pursuing a career to fulfill their own interests, rather than accepting the traditional gender role of staying home to raise a family. Furthermore, female faculty of Wellesley arguably defied gender norms of acting domestic and passive by engaging in self-care through outdoor activities like hiking and mountain climbing (Palmari, 1983). Although women psychologists of this generation were often denied positions in male-dominated universities, working at female colleges enabled them to access self-care in the form of receiving emotional support and physical activity in scenic environments. These contributions, achievements, and activist work define the conditions of first-generation female psychologists. These women broke through the glass ceilings for the first time in history, only to encounter more obstacles. Nevertheless, they opened doors to education and opportunities for advancement that were embraced by second-generation women psychologists.

### Second-Generation Women Psychologists

Using the ending point of Scarborough and Furumoto's (1987) list on first-generation female psychologists as their starting point, Johnston and Johnson (2008) identified 320 second-generation psychologists who had received their doctoral degrees between 1906 and 1945. These women were students of the first-generation psychologists who had paved the way for women to seek degrees in higher education. Women of the second generation embraced the ideal of integrating career and marriage to a greater degree than did first-generation women. Interestingly, 56 of those women identified by Johnston and Johnson (2008) married male psychologists.

As education became more available to women, second-generation female psychologists obtained doctoral degrees from both women's and coeducational colleges and universities. Second-generation women psychologists were more diverse than those of the first generation (Johnston & Johnson, 2008). Whereas the first generation of female psychologists came from upper middle-class families with Protestant backgrounds (Scarborough & Furumoto, 1987), women of the second generation included individuals from the lower socioeconomic class and women of different ethnic and religious backgrounds (Johnston & Johnson, 2008). Of Johnston and Johnson's list of female psychologists during this period, 5% were African American and 8% were Jewish. These women faced racial, religious, and sexist forms of discrimination (Johnston & Johnson, 2008).

In addition to facing various forms of discrimination, second-generation female psychologists were prohibited from being hired as faculty members at research universities where their husbands were working (Johnston & Johnson, 2008). Women

such as Dr. Mary Cover Jones, Dr. Tracy Seedman Kendler, Dr. Eleanor Jack Gibson, and Dr. Anne Roe accepted positions as research assistants or part-time instructors as a consequence of these hiring policies (Johnston & Johnson, 2008). Female psychologists were also excluded from committees in professional organizations. For example, when the American Psychological Association (APA) established the Emergency Committee in Psychology in 1939 to address psychological issues secondary to World War II, women were not appointed to the committee or allowed to assist, despite their interests and qualified backgrounds (Capshaw & Laszlo, 1986; Scarborough & Furumoto, 1987; Schwesinger, 1943). Women were told that their service was best confined to the home and to leave the war services to the male psychologists. In other words, “men must work and women – bless them – must weep” (Schwesinger, 1943, p. 298). However, these women did not accept such patriarchal beliefs. Instead, they proclaimed: “But we were psychologists as well as women, and we belonged to the vintage 1940. We would not take no for an answer. There must be a way to use us along the lines of our training and experience, professionally” (Schwesinger, 1943, p. 298). Second-generation female psychologists surpassed these challenges and found ways to make significant contributions to the field of psychology.

On an individual level, female psychologists from this era made significant contributions to the field of psychology through innovative publications and clinical work. Dr. Edna Heidbreder’s (1933) *Seven Psychologies* explored various facets of psychology, such as structuralism, functionalism, behaviorism, Gestalt psychology, and psychoanalysis. Developmentalist and experimentalist Eleanor Gibson pioneered the field of perception and learning, with contributions spanning from the 1930s to the present

(Gibson, 1991). Women's scientific contributions also challenged scientific findings that supported gender bias. For example, Hiedbreader (1927) found women and men to be similar on scales measuring introversion and extroversion. Leta Stetter Hollingworth's research challenged sex differences in academics (Hollingworth, 1914), finding no significant gender differences in mental traits such as memory and emotion (Hollingworth, 1918).

In addition to these significant publications, female psychologists also made pioneering advancements in clinical settings. As the only woman working in private practice in the state of Michigan, Dr. Maria Skodak Crissey provided consultation and evaluation services to physicians, schools, agencies, and parents beginning in 1942 and served as the director of the Division of Psychological Services from 1948 through 1969 (Fagan, 2002). She became a member of APA in 1938, was a fellow of six APA divisions, and served as president for both Divisions 17 (Section for the Advancement of Women in Counseling Psychology) and 33 (Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities) (Fagan, 2002). Another second-generation woman psychologist to also make significant contributions to the field of psychology was Dr. Marguerite Hertz. In addition to authoring more than 70 publications, she was the founding member and second president of the Rorschach Institute (now the Society for Personality Assessment), president of the Federation of Jewish Women's Organization and the Cleveland Council of Jewish Women, and an activist for women's rights (Kessler, 1994).

Lastly, women were also individually pioneering research in areas of social justice. The research by Dr. Evelyn Hooker (see Hooker, 1956, 1957, 1958, 1961, 1962, 1963, 1965) on male homosexuality shed light on the discriminatory practices conducted against gay men in the field of psychology and contributed to the process of

“homosexuality” being removed as a clinical diagnosis from the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual-third edition (APA, 1992; Schneidman, 1998). Dr. Susan Fiske also contributed to social issues through her research on stereotypes (Fiske, 1989; Fiske, Bersoff, Borgida, Deauz, & Heilman, 1991), reactions to nuclear war (Fiske, 1987), and human behavior in social psychology (Fiske, 1980). As women were contributing to psychology on an individual basis, this generation also worked in collaboration with one another to address the needs of women. As a result of women being denied access to serving on the Emergency Committee of Psychology, the National Council of Women Psychologists (NCWP) was established. The establishment of the NCWP was to “promote and develop emergency services for the duration of the war and to utilize the energies of women psychologists – academicians and practitioners alike ... and called attention to women’s need to be recognized in their professional role” (Scarborough, 1992, p. 315). The NCWP held its first executive board meeting on July 29<sup>th</sup>, 1942, in New York City (Capshe & Laszlo, 1986; Johnston & Johnson, 2008; Scarborough, 1992; Scarborough & Furumoto, 1987; Schwesinger, 1943). Dr. Florence L. Goodenough served as president, Dr. Helen Peak as Vice President, Dr. Theodora M. Abel as Treasurer, and Dr. Gradys C. Schwesinger as Executive Secretary (Schwesinger, 1943). Dr. Ruth Tolman, Dr. Alice Bryan, Dr. Edwina Cowan, Dr. Myrtle McGraw, Dr. Marion Bills, Dr. Harriett O’Shea, and Dr. Dorothy Van Alstyne served as NCWP directors (Schwesinger, 1943). Although the NCWP provided an outlet for female psychologists to discuss gender oppression, generate strategies for addressing such inequalities, and increase awareness of female psychologists’ contributions (Johnson & Johnston, 2010), it did not support feminist issues such as the Equal Rights Amendment (Scarborough &

Furumoto, 1987). Such feminist concerns gained attention from female psychologists when women of all professions took actions to improve their status in society (Scarborough, 1992; Scarborough & Furumoto 1987).

### Third-Generation Women Psychologists

Defining the third generation of female psychologists is challenging, because the literature has not yet identified specific women who represent this generation. Johnston and Johnson's (2008) identification of second-generation female psychologists does not lead to an identified third generation of women psychologists. The current challenge lies with identifying the characteristics of third-generation psychologists that differ from the second generation, as some second-generation psychologists are still active in the field. Although Johnston and Johnson (2008) defined second-generation women as individuals who received a doctorate in psychology between 1906 and 1945, third-generation female psychologists may not be so easily defined by graduation dates. Rather, social forces that came to bear in the late 1960s and early 1970s influenced a new activism; during this time, women psychologists became more political in addressing gender inequities. For example, the national women's movement that emerged in the 1960s provided social support necessary for women to advocate for themselves and within institutions (Scarborough, 1992). The political actions of self-identified feminist psychologists addressing women's issues within the field of psychology during the early 1970s were defined as *feminist psychology* (Chrisler & Smith, 2004). This paradigm shift in psychology saw feminist psychologists critiquing androcentric biases that flooded psychological theories and research, in addition to psychology's dependence on

laboratory experiments and negative assumptions surrounding qualitative research (Chrisler et al., 2013; Eagly & Riger, 2014). As feminist psychologists spoke out against patriarchal biases in psychology (Eagly & Riger, 2014; Rutherford & Pettit, 2015), they also formed organizations to further their agendas, such as the Association for Women in Psychology.

### *The Association for Women in Psychology*

The Association for Women in Psychology (AWP) was founded during an historic period when people of color had begun advocating for equality (Tiefer, 1991, 2009). The civil rights and women's movements had created national awareness of injustices toward minorities (Tiefer, 1991), promoting forms of activism such as consciousness-raising groups (Chrisler et al., 2013; Russo & Dumont, 1997). Consciousness-raising groups led by feminist psychologists located in communities and on college campuses eventually led to the foundation of *feminist therapy* (Brown, 1994; Chrisler et al., 2013; Williams, 1976). Women's awareness of sexism increased through women's studies courses and consciousness-raising groups, which influenced women's interest in advocating for gender equality and challenging institutionalized sexism within the American Psychological Association (Chrisler et al., 2013; Tiefer, 1991, 2009). Realizing how prominent sexism was in psychology and psychotherapies, women came together at the 1969 Chicago APA convention to form the Association for Women in Psychology (Chrisler et al., 2013; Tiefer, 1991, 2009). They aimed to improve women's overall status by forming an organization to address the concerns of women within the field of psychology and eventually advocate for students and clients. Not only were male

psychotherapists treating women through sexist stereotypes, but sexism was still very prominent in academic and professional settings. For example, APA denied the petition by AWP to incorporate policies in psychology departments against gender discrimination (Tiefer, 1991). Furthermore, male psychologists occupied leadership positions in professional psychology organizations, controlled educational curriculums of undergraduate and graduate programs, and were primary authors of college textbooks (Chrisler et al., 2013). It was indeed time for progressive change!

Twenty-seven members (26 females and one male) elected three temporary officers: Dr. Richard Roistacher as corresponding secretary, Dr. JoAnn Garner as spokeswoman, and Dr. Eleanor Kaplan as newsletter editor. The group met in February, 1970, in Chicago to define AWP's purpose and create bylaws. Members of AWP prepared 32 resolutions and 18 motions regarding sexism in academics and within APA, justifying the need for more research on issues related to women, to present at the April, 1970, APA Convention in Miami. Three years later, in October, 1973, Dr. Cathryn Adamsky organized the first AWP conference, which focused on feminist research and included workshops on sexuality, women's experiences of anger, androgyny, assertiveness, and other concerns of feminist therapists and researchers. Additional AWP conferences held in January 1975 in Carbondale, Illinois, and in Knoxville, Tennessee, in 1976 included workshops on feminist supervision, ethics in feminist practice, and techniques of feminist therapy. Socializing was another component of AWP conferences, beginning with the addition of a woman's band at the 1977 conference held in St. Louis, Missouri, and a dance at the 1978 Pittsburgh conference (Tiefer, 1991). Although these psychologists were not directly addressing issues of self-care, the entertainment and



socialization provided at these conferences was an opportunity for support. For the first time in history, women were able to come together in a national organization and discuss their concerns. In her 2009 history of AWP, Leonore Tiefer described AWP as a “new organization [that] created a space from which to challenge both the sexist intellectual content of psychology and the sexist organizational features of the APA” (p. 3).

Altogether, AWP brought together female psychologists, clinicians, nonclinicians, heterosexual and lesbian women, students, and experts working together to raise awareness of unfair practices in psychology and generate ideas to promote change (Tiefer, 2009). One example of promoting change came from an awareness of how male psychologists continued to treat women in psychology unfairly, as exemplified by demeaning and objectifying behaviors by male psychologists towards female graduate students at the 1969 American Psychological Association conference (Russo & Dumont, 1997). As a response to demanding greater wellbeing for female psychologists, an APA division committed to focusing on women’s issues was established in 1973, known today at Division 35: The Society for the Psychology of Women (Russo & Dumont, 1997; Scarborough, 1992).

### *APA Division 35*

Chaired by Dr. Helen S. Astin, a counseling psychologist, the eight-member task force documented women’s underprivileged status in psychology in a 2-year study (Andersen, Astin, Roose, & Sorenson, 1973; Russo & Dumont, 1997). The goal of the task force was to “further the major purpose of APA--advance psychology as a science and as a means of promoting human welfare--by making recommendations to ensure that

women would be accepted as fully enfranchised members of the profession” (Andersen et al., 1973, p. 611). Andersen et al. identified the ways in which women were presented as “biologically, intellectually, and morally inferior to men” through therapeutic and clinical theories that also affected clinical training (p. 613). Helen Astin led the task force that formed Division 35, along with Tena Cummings, Lorraine Eyde, Nancy Anderson, and Martha Mednick (Russo & Dumont, 1997). Elizabeth Douvan was the first president of Division 35, with Helen Astin as president-elect, Lorraine Eyde as secretary-treasurer, Florence Denmark as the first program chair, Barbara Strudler Wallston as elections chair, and Rhoda Unger as membership chair (Russo & Dumont, 1997). These women leaders of Division 35 modeled a feminist orientation by operating under egalitarian principles and including student involvement (Scarborough, 1992). Consistently, core values of Division 35 included openness, inclusion, egalitarianism, and a commitment to improving research and practice in psychology (Russo & Dumont, 1997). The establishment of Division 35 created various advancements for women in psychology, such as a peer-reviewed journal titled *The Psychology of Women Quarterly*, first published in 1976 with Georgia Babladelis as the editor, and a series of books on feminist topics in psychology (Russo & Dumont, 1997; Scarborough, 1992). Division 35 has been active in areas such as addressing sexism in research (Denmark, Russo, Frieze, & Sechzer, 1988), teaching curriculums (Kimmel, 1991a, 1991b), and mental health settings (Claster & Marecek, 1983). The Division 35 Task Force on Lesbian Issues helped form Division 44, the Society for the Psychological Study of Lesbian and Gay Issues, in 1990 (Russo & Dumont, 1997). To address the concerns of women of color, task forces for Black, Hispanic, Asian, and Native American women were established between 1976 and

1984 (Russo & Dumont, 1997). These task forces provided a platform from which women of color could voice their concerns and led to groups such as the Section of the Psychology of Black Women and the Committee on the Concerns of Hispanic Women (Russo & Dumont, 1997). Today, Division 35 “continues to work to translate its commitment to the value of diversity into reality, while maintaining a unity of purpose and providing a power base and haven for feminist psychologists to pursue an evolving, multifaceted agenda” (Russo & Dumont, 1997, p. 223). Lastly, understanding the achievements of women in counseling psychology requires attention to the establishment of the American Psychological Association Division 17’s Committee on Women / Section for the Advancement of Women (SAW).

#### *APA Division 17 Section for the Advancement of Women (SAW)*

The idea for establishing an ad hoc committee on women within Division 17 was initiated by Jean Parsons and Jan Harrison, and co-founded by Louise Vetter and Jean Parsons in 1970 (Farmer, 2002). By 1982, this committee was formalized as the Division 17 Committee on Women, and Division 17 Section for the Advancement of Women in 1996 (Farmer, 2002). The ad hoc committee on women addressed many inequalities negatively impacting women during the 1970s, such as reducing sex biases in counseling theories and research (Farmer & Baker, 1977; Farmer, 2002). Between 1993 and 1995, the dedicated efforts by psychologists Linda Forrest, Ruth Fassinger, and Judy Ellickson, who chaired the Committee on Women during this timeframe contributed to creating the Section on Women within Division 17 in 1996 (Farmer, 2002). The name was eventually changed in 1998 to the Section for the Advancement of Women (SAW) (Farmer, 2002).

Article 1 of the bylaws for SAW describes five overarching goals: providing a network of support and forum to discuss ideas, as well as promote and mentor women in psychology; enhancing awareness of women's issues in counseling psychology and additional APA organizations focused on educating and training psychologists; dispensing research and information focused on counseling women and girls and supporting research focused on women's issues; promoting competency in counseling women and girls; and enhancing the public's awareness of women's issues and increasing advocacy for women in public settings (Farmer 2002). In addition to advocating for women through research, practice, and services, third-generation women psychologists were also contributing to the field by obtaining remarkable leadership positions.

Women psychologists contributed to psychology through leadership positions. Drs. Barbara Kirk, Ursula Delworth, and Naomi Meara were elected presidents of Division 17 in 1974, 1982, and 1989, respectively. Furthermore, Drs. Jan Birk, Jo-Ida Hansen, Kathy Davis, Dorothy Nevill, Rosie Bingham, and Jean Carter were elected presidents in the 1990s (Farmer, 2002). In addition to leading Division 17, women psychologists became editors and editorial board members of psychology journals and were vocal in developing accreditation guidelines for graduate programs and internships (Farmer, 2002). Indeed, the establishment of the Association for Women in Psychology, Division 35, and SAW are three major examples of how third-generation female psychologists banded together to address sexist practices in the field of psychology and create social change both within and outside psychology.

Another way of exploring this generation is by identifying trends found within the research for the past decade through a journal representing psychological topics

concerning women. The *Psychology of Women Quarterly* was founded when women's contributions in academe were gaining increasing attention and recognition (Johnston & Johnson, 2008; Scarborough, 1992). It serves as one of the leading journals for representing feminist research (Stake, 2009; White, 2005). Jacquelyn White, the editor of *Psychology of Women Quarterly* from 2000 to 2005, set out to address four goals for her role as editor: structure for diversity; distribute leadership and responsibility; value all voices and decide through consensus; and promote social change (White, 2005). White (2005) reviewed themes in submissions and publications between 2000 to 2004 and found that physical and mental health, violence, and attitudes and roles (e.g., stereotypes, gender roles, and gender attitudes) were the three most recurrent topics in submissions. Less than 25% of the articles addressed race or ethnicity, and less than 20% of submissions addressed self-esteem or body image (White, 2005). The most frequent topics found in articles published in the *Psychology of Women Quarterly* between 2000 and 2004 were violence and health, followed by body image, stereotyping, prejudice, and gender attitudes (White, 2005). Less than 10% of studies focused on feminist issues, whereas race and ethnicity were addressed by a little over 20% of the publications (White, 2005). White (2005) concluded that present-day research was not sufficiently addressing issues pertaining to socioeconomic class, sexual orientation, or the concerns of women over age 30 or girls under age 18. Based on these findings, it is interesting to further explore trends in these publications in the following five years.

As the outgoing editor in 2009, Jayne Stake identified trends in the topics of papers published in the *Psychology of Women Quarterly* between 2005 and 2009 (Stake, 2009). The 12 topics identified, in order of most to least frequent, were violence, self-

objectification, gender bias, career/academic, feminism, lesbian issues, methodology, gender roles, clinical issues, leadership, miscellaneous, and physical health (Stake, 2009). The most frequently published topic, violence, was defined as “prevention of and recovery from adult sexual assault, attitudes toward victims and perpetrators, predictors of victimization and revictimization, physical abuse, attitudes of support providers, sexual harassment predictors, and consequences” (Stake, 2009, p. 372). The topic of violence continues to appear frequently among research published in this feminist journal. Lesbian issues, which Stake (2009) defined as “lesbian identity, coping with bias and stress, relationships, self-image” (p.372), which was sixth on the list identified by Stake, have increased in frequency since 2004. A brief review of the table of contents from all issues of *Psychology of Women Quarterly* over the past four years suggests that objectification, violence, sexism and racism, and gender inequality are popular topics addressed by third-generation women psychologists who conduct feminist research.

Of course, the impact of civil rights, feminism, and other movements has been felt beyond feminist organizations and their journals. A specific topic that has gained focus since 1980 in the field of counseling psychology is multiculturalism and diversity, which is further explored in the following section.

### Multiculturalism in Counseling Psychology

The history of counseling psychology has been well documented (e.g., Heppner, Casas, Carter, & Stone, 2000; Jordan, Myers, Layton, & Morgan, 1968; Robinson, 1964; Wrenn, 1966). Books such as *The History of Counseling Psychology* (Whiteley, 1980) and *Counseling Psychology: A Historical Perspective* (Whiteley, 1984) have explored the

foundations of counseling psychology, including significant leaders, publications, and events that contributed to the development of this field (Heppner et al., 2000). The growth of counseling psychology has been greatly influenced by social movements and the voices of minority groups advocating for their political and social rights. For example, the civil rights movement brought awareness not only to people of color but also to the needs of persons with physical disabilities, individuals identifying as gay/lesbian/bisexual/transgender, women, and older adults (Heppner et al., 2000).

As the population of the United States grew more diverse through higher birth rates and immigration in the 1980s and 1990s, mental health services addressed the needs of individuals from diverse racial and cultural backgrounds. The vocational rehabilitation movement began in the 1920s with the Civilian Rehabilitation Conference in 1924, renamed the National Rehabilitation Association in 1927, and in the 1950s was an area of research specialization for psychologists. This movement, eventually called the Persons-with-Disabilities Civil Rights movement, formed out of awareness that persons with disabilities have shared experiences of oppression and discrimination, and eventually led to the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the 1990 Americans with Disabilities Act (Heppner et al., 2000). An awareness of the needs of older adults emerged with the American Association of Retired Persons in 1958 and the Older Persons Comprehensive Counseling Assistant Act in 1983 (Heppner et al., 2000). Likewise, the women's liberation movement enhanced awareness of the discrimination women faced and influenced the creation of university women's studies programs, programs for affirmative action, and state laws providing equal opportunities (Bond & Mulvey, 2000; Heppner et al., 2000; Scarborough, 1992). Organizations such as the Gay Liberation Front and Gay

Activist Alliance began advocating for the political rights of gays and lesbians in the 1960s and 1970s, also bringing awareness of this marginalized population (Heppner et al., 2000).

As disenfranchised groups became more vocal about their social and political rights throughout the years, the field of psychology took action to meet their needs. One example that illustrated this effort was the creation of guidelines focused on addressing the clinical needs of women (American Psychological Association, 2007); lesbian, gay, and bisexual individuals (American Psychological Association, 2012; Division 44/Committee on Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Concerns Joint Task Force on Guidelines for Psychotherapy with Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Clients, 2000); and intervention and assessments of persons with disabilities (APA, 2012). Additionally, the *Guidelines on Multicultural Education, Training, Research, Practice, and Organizational Change for Psychologists* (APA, 2003) address the various needs of individuals marginalized in society as well as in psychology, based on their ethnic backgrounds or group identities in practice, research, and training.

Counseling psychology has seen a rise in research dedicated to multiculturalism and diversity. Buboltz, Miller, and Williams (1999) reviewed studies published in the *Journal of Counseling Psychology* between 1973 and 1998, and found that *ethnicity* was reported in 11% of the studies published in 1973 and in 92% of studies published in 1998. The authors suggest that this difference may account for “a greater awareness of multicultural issues among individual authors, the editor, and the discipline of counseling psychology” (Buboltz, Miller, & Williams, 1999, p. 501). Edwards and Pedrotti (2008) conducted a review of multiracial issues published between 1988 and 2006 in six major



counseling journals: *The Counseling Psychologist*, *Journal of Multicultural Counseling and Development*, *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice*, *Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology*, *Journal of Counseling and Development*, and the *Journal of Counseling Psychology*. Results of their review suggest that few studies concerning multiracial issues are being published in these six journals (Edwards & Pedrotti, 2008). Only 18 articles focusing on mixed-race individuals had been published in these journals within this time frame (Edwards & Pedrotti, 2008). One may conclude from the review of Buboltz, Miller, and Williams (1999) and Edwards and Pedrotti (2008) that research addressing specific needs of diverse populations is critical to the continued growth of counseling psychology.

Developing multicultural counseling competencies was a major focus in counseling psychology from the early 1980s when Sue et al. (1982) created a report addressing multicultural competency, although it was not endorsed by the executive committee of Division 17 until 20 years later (APA, 2003; Sue, Arredondo, & McDavis, 1992). The topic of multicultural competency has received much attention in research over the years (see Arredondo, 1998; Arredondo et al., 1996; Sue, 1998; Sue, Arredondo, & McDavis, 1992; Worthington, Soth-McNett, & Moreno, 2007). The importance of multicultural competency and training was illustrated through research on assessment (Constantine & Ladany, 2001; Pope-Davis & Dings, 1995; Worthington, Moberly, Franks, & Tan, 2000), training (Bernal & Padilla, 1982; Pope-Davis, Reynolds, Dings, & Nielson, 1995; Sheely-More & Kooyman, 2011; Smith, Constantine, Dunn, Dinehart, & Montoya, 2006), practice (Owen, Leach, Wampold, & Rodolfa, 2011), and personal awareness (Ottavi, Pope-Davis, & Dings, 1994; Sadowsky, Kuo-Jackson, Richardson, &

Corey, 1998). The extensive literature on developing and maintaining multicultural competence was evidence of the importance that counseling psychology placed on being and preparing multiculturally competent providers of mental health services.

Publications promoting multicultural competency in counseling (Arredondo et al., 1996; Sue, Arredondo, McDavis, 1992; Sue et al., 1982) led to the establishment of the *Multicultural Guidelines* (APA, 2003). Vera and Speight (2003) argued that the guidelines on multicultural counseling competencies failed to address how mental health workers can become vehicles of social change and concluded that the definition of multicultural competence must include a focus on advocacy in order to represent a commitment to social justice. They stated, “A social justice-informed psychologist seeks to transform the world, not just understand the world” (Vera & Speight, 2003, p. 261). Ivey and Collins (2003) argued that the multicultural counseling competencies are a “work in progress” in social justice activism. However, they also strongly agreed with Vera and Speight’s (2003) statement: “Without an explicit emphasis on ending oppression, counselors may misconceptualize (or underemphasize) major determinants of (and therefore solutions to) problems that compromise the wellbeing of marginalized communities,” (p. 270). Although the multicultural competency movement historically stemmed from the social justice movement (Arredondo & Perez, 2003), Vera and Speight (2003) challenged the status quo by encouraging counseling psychologists to engage in interventions that address changes in institutional and organizational systems (Ivey & Collins, 2003). They asserted that counseling psychologists are responsible for doing more than just increasing one’s self-awareness of discrimination, racism, and oppression, as agents of social change (Vera & Speight, 2003). In addition to providing direct therapy

services, engaging in “advocacy, outreach, prevention programs, and psychoeducational interventions would be a priority in multiculturally competent, communitarian social-justice-based practice” (Vera & Speight, 2003, p. 263). Thus, multicultural competency requires counseling psychologists to take on various roles in order to serve as social change agents (Vera & Speight, 2003).

### Call for Social Justice

#### *Definitions*

The Social Justice and Ethics Social Action Group at the National Counseling Psychology Conference defined *social justice* as the following:

A concept that advocates engaging individuals as co-participants in decisions which directly affect their lives; it involves taking some action, and educating individuals in order to open possibilities, and to act with value and respect for individuals and their group identities, considering power differentials in all areas of counseling and research. (Blustein, Elman, & Gerstein, 2001, p. 9)

Furthermore, *advocacy* is defined by Toporek & Liu (2001) as the following:

Action a mental health professional, counselor, or psychologist takes in assisting clients and client groups to achieve therapy goals through participating in clients’ environments. Advocacy may be seen as an array of roles that counseling professionals adopt in the interest of clients, including empowering, advocacy, and social action. (p. 387)

#### *Social Justice in Counseling Psychology*

Social justice is an important focus of counseling psychologists working to enhance multicultural competency (Arredondo & Perez, 2003; Ivey & Collins, 2003).

According to Vera and Speight (2003):

Social justice is at the heart of multiculturalism in that the existence of institutionalized racism, sexism, and homophobia is what accounts for the

inequitable experiences of people of color, women, gay, lesbian, and bisexual people (among others) in the United States.... Counseling psychology's operationalization of multicultural competence must be grounded in a commitment to social justice that necessitates an expansion of professional activities beyond individual counseling. Any multicultural movement that underemphasizes social justice is likely to do little to eradicate oppression and will maintain the status quo to the detriment of historically marginalized people. (p. 254-255)

Indeed, developing multicultural competence is only one of many social justice actions performed by counseling psychologists. Several ways in which counseling psychologists are actively involved in social justice include working against homophobia, sexism, racism, and ageism; increasing access to education and vocational opportunities; working with organizations and institutions outside the United States; advocating for political prisoners; eliminating human rights abuses; and identifying strategies to protect the environment (Fouad, Gerstein, & Toporek, 2006; Toporek & Reza, 2001).

Engaging in social justice activism, or “taking steps to change social systems that oppress our clients” is considered an ethical obligation of feminist multicultural therapists (Morrow, Hawxhurst, Montes de Vegas, Abousleman, & Castañeda, 2006, p. 241).

According to the Feminist Therapy Institute Code of Ethics (2000), “A feminist therapist seeks multiple avenues for impacting change, including public education and advocacy within professional organizations, lobbying for legislative actions, and other appropriate activities” (p.1). Social justice is not only an integral component of being an ethical therapist (Feminist Therapy Institute, 2000) but can also serve as a therapeutic intervention (Morrow et al., 2006). Similar to the Feminist Therapy Institute Code of Ethics (2000), both the APA Multicultural Guidelines (APA, 2003) and APA Guidelines for Psychological Practice with Women and Girls (APA, 2007) accentuate the importance of social justice advocacy in creating micro- and macro-level changes. These ethical

codes and guidelines illustrate the importance of incorporating social justice advocacy into one's clinical work. According to Fouad and Prince (2012), social justice advocacy in counseling psychology urges counseling psychologists to "use their knowledge and expertise to actively create new opportunities for clients, to change the systems that perpetuate injustice, and to advocate for new policies that will institutionalize equality and fairness" (p. 856). However, the literature on social justice is just beginning to explore the experiences of counseling psychologists dedicated to advocacy and social justice work, specifically at systemic levels (Caldwell and Vera, 2010; Norsworthy, Abrams, & Lindlau, 2012). Indeed, many counseling psychologists and graduate students are currently involved in feminist multicultural advocacy and social justice work within their communities, in professional organizations, in academe, within political and legal systems, and on an international level (Norsworthy, Abrams, & Lindlau, 2012). Caldwell and Vera (2010) identified five themes that emerged from 169 critical incidents contributing to the development of a social justice orientation of 36 doctoral students and professionals in counseling psychology. The themes of "Exposure to Injustice" and "Influence of Significant Persons" were identified as the most influential of their five themes, followed by "Education/Learning," "Work Experiences," and "Religion/Spirituality," in that order. They also found these five themes to have the effect of increasing one's understanding of social justice, promoting changes in identity, and experiencing an increase in awareness. Such research emphasizes the importance placed on social justice in counseling psychology and illustrates the extent to which counseling psychologists and graduate students are engaged in social justice work.

*Women and Social Justice Advocacy*

Women psychologists were involved in advocacy dating back to the first generation of female psychologists. These women obtained educations at the bachelor and graduate levels during a time when education was available only to men, and they further advocated for equal educational and vocational opportunities for women (Milar, 2000; Scarborough & Furumoto, 1987). They behaved in ways that defied gender norms through mountain climbing, hiking, or bicycling (Palmieri, 1983). Their research challenged widely accepted patriarchal views of sex differences (Milar, 2000). Finally, women from this generation became the first female members of the American Psychological Association (Scarborough & Furumoto, 1987). The efforts of these women created additional opportunities for future generations of female psychologists.

Second-generation female psychologists also confronted sexism in careers and at psychological conventions (Johnston & Johnson, 2008; Scarborough & Furumoto, 1987). They initiated research questioning stereotypes and gender bias and examining gender differences, as well as advocating for other oppressed groups. They formed organizations such as the National Council of Women Psychologists to address gender oppression and push the boundaries of sexism in psychology. These advances set the stage for and contributed to the growing consciousness among women psychologists of a need for activism.

Spurred by second-generation women psychologists and the advent of civil rights and the women's liberation movement, third-generation women took activism a step further and formed feminist professional organizations to address the needs of female students, mental health professionals, clients, faculty members, and women in careers

(Capshew & Laszlo, 1986; Johnston & Johnson, 2008; Scarborough & Furumoto, 1987; Schwesinger, 1943; Tiefer, 1991). Coming together through membership in psychological organizations created opportunities for women to support one another and identify sexist, racist, and other discriminatory practices against women and other marginalized people, which led to advocating for equal treatment for all oppressed groups. These organizations, such as the Association for Women in Psychology, Division 35, Division 44, and Division 45, still exist today, with missions that advocate for the needs of women of all backgrounds.

Social justice activism by female activists in counseling psychology of the present day is widespread and focuses on various domains. Women are conducting research that focuses on the incorporation of social justice into counseling training programs (e.g., Beer, Greene, Spanierman, & Todd, 2012; Toporek & McNally, 2006) and for prevention in schools (e.g., Davidson, Waldo, & Adams, 2006); addressing marginalized communities and environmental racism in communities (e.g., Israel, 2006; Santiago-Rivera, Talka, & Tully, 2006); advocacy in education and vocation (e.g., Fassinger & Gallor, 2006); identifying nonviolent means of helping other countries (e.g., Gerstein & Kirkpatrick, 2006); international consultation (e.g., Horne & Mathews, 2006); and social justice involved in policy and legislation (e.g., Toporek, 2006). In addition to conducting research in social justice, female counseling psychologists are also engaged in hands-on activist work.

Sharon Horne, Rita Chi-Ying Chung, and Kathryn Norsworthy are counseling psychologists with extensive experience in international research, service, and advocacy. Horne has spent time in Russia and Kyrgyzstan addressing gay, lesbian, bisexual, and

transgender issues (Tang, Conyne, Heppner, Horne, et al., 2012). Chi-Ying Chung has conducted research on working with immigrants (Chung, Bemak, Ortiz, Sandoval-Perez, 2008) and has worked in Latin America, Asia, and the Pacific Rim (Toporek, Gerstein, Fouad, et al., 2006). In 2006, Norsworthy was the executive director of the U.S.-based nongovernmental organization Ahimsa International: Projects for Peace, Justice, and Mindful Living (Toporek et al., 2006). Describing her experiences, Norsworthy stated:

Since 1997, Ouyporn Khuankaew, a Thai feminist activist-educator, and I often partner with local groups from the Burmese communities to collaborate on projects dealing with social issues, such as trauma, peace-building, and power-sharing leadership aimed at strengthening the Burmese democracy movement. Accompanying our friends in their work has touched me deeply, amplified the importance of allies, and strengthened my commitment to social justice. (Tang, Conyne, Heppner, et. al., 2012, p. 246)

The work of these women illustrates the intensity of their efforts to promote social justice, and they are not alone. Over 25 female counseling psychologists with research interests in social justice contributed to the *Handbook for Social Justice in Counseling Psychology: Leadership, Vision, and Action* (Toporek et al., 2006).

Graduate students in counseling psychology programs are also involved in social justice work. Nineteen students in counseling psychology doctoral programs made contributions to the *Handbook for Social Justice in Counseling Psychology: Leadership, Vision, and Action* (Toporek et al., 2006), 13 of whom are female. Indeed, counseling psychology programs are recognizing the importance of incorporating social justice training into their programs (see Bemak & Chung, 2011; Brady-Amoon, Makhija, Dixit, & Dator, 2012; Burns & Singh, 2010; Chung & Bemak, 2013; Goodman, Liang, Helms, et al., 2004; Norsworthy, Abrams, & Landau, 2006; O'Brien, Patel, Hensler-McGinnis, & Kaplan, 2006; Singh et al., 2010; Toporek & Vaughn, 2010). Kathryn Norsworthy stated,



“Increasingly clear to me is the importance of infusing social justice work as a professional responsibility throughout the training of counselors and counseling psychologists” (Tang, Conyne, Heppner, et. al., 2012, p. 246). In some programs, students have expressed a desire for their programs to incorporate more social justice training (Beer, Spanierman, Greene, & Todd, 2012). A study by Singh et al. (2010) explored the experiences of 66 doctoral trainees in counseling psychology programs involved in social justice advocacy. Results of their study found that some trainees are incorporating social justice into their clinical work, teaching, research, and personal lives by challenging worldviews and belief systems and are involved in activism through campus and community organizations (Singh et. al., 2010). The counseling psychology doctoral program at Boston College has integrated social justice work into its core curriculum so trainees gain experience conducting advocacy work at micro and meso levels (Goodman, Liang, Helms, et al., 2004).

In addition, doctoral trainees in counseling psychology programs that do not require students to engage in advocacy work are finding creative ways to serve as advocates. For example, Elizabeth Abrams, a counseling psychology doctoral trainee at the University of Utah, created a community-based group called WWIRE --White Women Working on Issues of Race and Equity--where members engage in discussions and activities concerning antiracist work (Norsworthy, Abrams, & Lindlau, 2012). This process of ongoing self-examination is one of the principles from feminist and multicultural counseling theories in which Goodman et al. (2004) suggested students and professionals should engage when doing social justice work. Clearly, counseling psychologists and doctoral trainees in counseling psychology programs are currently

invested in social justice advocacy and will continue to engage in this work. Accordingly, identifying challenges associated with conducting social justice work and ways to combat such challenges is vital to helping counseling psychologists and graduate students continue their missions.

### Challenges to Conducting Social Justice Work

Conducting social justice work may lead to negative outcomes such as feeling emotionally exhausted, being viewed as trying to cause trouble, placing one's job in jeopardy, facing repercussions at work, and being harassed (Bradley, Werth, Hastings, & Pierce, 2012; Dinsmore et al., 2000). Therapists in rural communities expressed concerns that clients with opposing beliefs on controversial topics would choose to discontinue treatment, feared belittlement or criticism from community members, and were concerned for family members' safety (Bradley et al., 2012). Smith and Redington (2010) explored the effects of advocacy involved in antiracist work. They found that White activists conducting this type of work experienced conflicts in vocational settings and in relationships with significant partners (Smith & Redington, 2010). Graduate students are particularly likely to encounter frustration and hopelessness in advocacy work as a result of spending a significant amount of time and energy on work that is ignored or not rewarded (Goodman et al., 2004). An additional obstacle includes lacking resources or skills necessary to organize participation from community members (Goodman et. al., 2004). In addition to facing similar struggles as students, faculty members may also be discouraged from conducting social justice research as a result of limited funding allocated to research pertaining to social justice topics (Goodman et. al., 2004; Helms,

2003). Indeed, unless students and faculty members are prepared for such obstacles, the challenges they encounter may deter them from pursuing their advocacy work. Methods of self-care and coping strategies are imperative for those individuals conducting social justice work.

### Self-Care

Godfrey et al. (2011) conducted a two-stage analysis of 139 definitions of self-care between 1970 and 2010 and identified key components describing self-care. These components include “deliberate care performed throughout life; to promote health or improve both general health and mental health, and cope with illness or disability. Self-care also includes social support and provides the continuity of care necessary to maintain wellbeing” (p. 12). Self-care was also described as occurring either in collaboration with healthcare professionals or on an individual level (Godfrey et al., 2011). Using theories about human behaviors from ecologists, Wasco, Campbell, and Clark (2002) described the self-care routines of advocates as “interactive processes between persons and the systems in which they are embedded; the strategies draw upon individual resources and are enacted in the context of organizational supports and structures” (p. 735). They emphasized the importance of how agencies can provide support to their employees (Wasco, Campbell, & Clark, 2002).

Research suggests that psychology graduate students and psychologists often experience distress and impairment as part of the profession (Cushway, 1992; O’Connor, 2001; Pakenham, 2015; Sherman & Thelen, 1998) and face stressors causing burnout, vicarious trauma (Figley, 1995; Figley, 2002; Harrison & Westwood, 2009), emotional

exhaustion, and fatigue (Mahoney, 1997), all of which can negatively impact client welfare (O'Connor, 2001). Exploring self-care strategies for mental health professionals has been addressed in the literature (Baker, 2003; Guy & Norcross, 1998; Harrison & Westwood, 2009; Holzman, Searight, & Hughes, 1996; Mahoney, 1997; Pakenham, 2015; Wise, Hearst, & Gibson, 2012). The amount of attention directed to self-care strategies for mental healthcare workers may be due in part to how self-care is perceived as an ethical obligation (Wise, Hearst, & Gibson, 2012). Indeed, practicing self-care is vital for graduate students, psychologists, and the welfare of their clientele.

Self-care can be implemented in many ways. The use of personal therapy has been found to be a significant modality of self-care utilized by both clinical psychology graduate students (Holzman, Searight, & Hughes, 1996) and licensed psychologists (Mahoney, 1997). Wise et al. (2012) identified mindfulness practice, positive psychology, cognitive and behavior therapy, and religion as forms of self-care for psychologists. A study on 56 clinical psychology students in training in Australia found that principles of acceptance and commitment therapy were a form of self-care (Pakenham, 2015). Self-care practices specific to career women and female leaders vary in the literature. Support from family members, friends, and colleagues; spirituality; and exercise were identified as self-care strategies used by female leaders in early childhood health and education (Turner, 2010), successful career women with sensory and physical disabilities (Noonan et al., 2004), and highly achieving African American and White career women (Richie, Fassinger, Linn, Johnson, & Prosser, 1997). Additional self-care strategies implemented by female leaders include maintaining a healthy diet and using humor (Noonan et al., 2004; Turner, 2010) and starting a women's support group for

women in similar leadership positions (Turner, 2010). Hobbies such as reading and traveling, receiving psychotherapy, and spirituality were also identified as self-care strategies for successful African American career women who identified stressors pertaining to both sexism and racism (Richie et al., 1997). Although it is important to identify self-care strategies for men and women across disciplines, few studies have specifically focused on self-care for social justice advocates, particularly females.

The few studies that explore the reflections and perspectives of social justice advocates (e.g., Caldwell & Vera, 2010; Smith & Redington, 2010; Steinfeldt et al., 2012) offered information about coping strategies for individuals conducting very specific social justice advocacy work. For example, a qualitative study by Steinfeldt et al. (2012) explored the impact on 11 social justice advocates of their efforts to eliminate mascots, logos, or nicknames affiliated with Native American cultures. They identified five coping strategies for advocates: using humor, reframing resistance, avoiding escalation, building alliances, and supportive sharing (Steinfeldt et al., 2012). Furthermore, Smith and Redington (2010) explored the experiences of 18 individuals who identified as White antiracist activists and found that colleagues, friends, family members, professors, and partners were means of support for these activists. By exploring the perspectives and experiences of social justice advocates, Steinfeldt et al. (2012) and Smith and Redington (2010) offered new insights towards identifying coping strategies of individuals conducting work in social justice. However, more research is needed to better understand the self-care methods specifically employed by women. Wasco, Campbell, and Clark (2002) analyzed the self-care practices of female rape victim advocates who provided outreach services to female rape survivors. They

identified self-care methods that were cognitive (changing one's perspective), physical (exercise), social and recreational (seeking support from friends or engaging in recreational activities), spiritual, and verbal (verbally expressing feelings and emotions). However, this study, like other studies exploring self-care practices of advocates, is very limited in that it only focuses on one particular form of advocacy--working with survivors of sexual assault. Additional research is needed to explore the self-care practices of individuals, particularly female psychologists and graduate students in counseling psychology who engage in social justice activism more broadly.

#### Rationale for Study

The literature on social justice has just begun to explore the experiences of counseling psychologists dedicated to advocacy and social justice work, specifically at the systemic levels (Caldwell & Vera, 2010; Norsworthy, Abrams, & Lindlau, 2012). Many counseling psychologists and graduate students are currently involved in feminist multicultural advocacy and social justice work within their communities, professional organizations, academe, political and legal systems, and on an international level (Norsworthy et al., 2012). Norsworthy et al. (2012) emphasized the importance of exploring and better understanding the challenges encountered by feminist multicultural counseling psychologists engaging in social justice work and advocacy. Understanding the obstacles faced by current counseling psychologists can offer insights for preparing future generations of counseling psychologists who wish to conduct work in the social justice domain. The current study provided insights into the challenges and barriers faced by women who have made effective progressive changes in the social justice domain. By

exploring the lives of women in counseling psychology who have made progressive social changes, this study provides insights into the meanings of self-care and effective methods to prevent burnout and enhance self-care for women pursuing social justice work, another important topic lacking in the literature (see Norsworthy et al., 2012).

The present study addressed the following questions:

1. How is self-care defined by female psychologists and female graduate students in the field of counseling psychology who were engaged in social justice activism?
2. What types of self-care methods do they identify as helpful in relieving stress and avoiding burnout, and in what ways is stress relieved by incorporating these forms of self-care?
3. What challenges do these women encounter that prevent them from engaging in self-care practices?
4. How are such challenges overcome?

## CHAPTER II

### METHOD

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the role and meaning of self-care for female counseling psychology graduate students and female counseling psychologists engaged in social justice advocacy. Qualitative methods embraced the perspectives of participants by using their words to illustrate their “lived experiences” (erlebnis) (Ponterotto, 2002, p. 398) with methods that respected and upheld the dignity and integrity of participants (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Qualitative methods accounted for women’s values and subjective experiences as they pertained to the research phenomenon (O’Shaughnessy & Krogman, 2012). I approached this study from a constructivist paradigm.

#### Paradigm Underpinning the Research

I approached this study from a constructivist paradigm (Guba & Lincoln, 1989, 1994) for its emphasis on valuing multiple realities and individuals’ experiences as a framework for understanding knowledge (Creswell, 2007; Ponterotto, 2005). Women with diverse backgrounds are engaged in various forms of social justice advocacy (see Toporek et al., 2006). Therefore, I argue that self-care practices vary across cultural backgrounds and types of social justice advocacy. Thus, a constructivist paradigm was



appropriate for this study to grasp multiple meanings of self-care formulated from such a diverse population. In general, the method by which the researcher conceptualizes data is perceived as a joint process between participants and the researcher as a means of conducting “transformative research” (Creswell, 2007, p. 26). This collaborative approach was vital for my study involving participants with a shared history of oppression and prejudices. O’Shaughnessy and Krogman (2012) asserted:

The feminist principles of respecting women’s (and other oppressed groups’) unique ways of knowing, destabilizing power relations in the research process, and confronting socially constructed gendered inequalities (Chafetz, 1997; DeVault, 1996; Jaggar, 2008) have underscored a proclivity to give voice to women through qualitative research methods.” (p. 495)

My study attempted to empower women by representing their perspectives in a fair and just manner.

Using a constructivist paradigm as a framework for this study, I sought to understand the nature of the reality of female counseling psychologists and graduate students who were engaged in social justice work by exploring their experiences with self-care (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Given that constructivist paradigms assume knowledge is socially constructed through “our lived experiences and through our interactions with other members of society” (Lincoln, Lynham, & Guba, 2011, p. 103), I sought to understand the meaning of self-care as it related to my participants’ involvement in social justice advocacy, the impact that self-care had on working independently or alongside others conducting social justice work, and whether or not self-care impacted other roles in their lives (e.g., wives, partners, mothers, daughters). Additionally, under a constructivist paradigm, the subjective and multiple realities of every participant were equally acknowledged to ensure that all perspectives were represented in the study

(Creswell, 2007; Lincoln, Lynham, & Guba, 2011). The literature has clearly identified the reasons why psychologists and graduate students should engage in self-care, but little research has explored the self-care practices specific to female social justice advocates in the counseling psychology literature. The literature that does address self-care for social justice advocates is limited and lacking an understanding of the meaning of self-care to these advocates. Through qualitative methods, female social justice advocates were given the opportunity to describe their experiences with respect to their stories, values, and belief systems, thus creating a greater understanding of how they made meaning of self-care practices as female advocates.

Under a constructivist paradigm, I attended to the relationship between the researcher and the participants (Creswell, 2007; Morrow, 2007), because “we are shaped by our lived experiences, and these will always come out in the knowledge we generate as researchers and in the data generated by our subjects” (Lincoln, Lynham, & Guba, 2011, p. 104). As the principal researcher, the imbalance of power between participants and me was carefully considered throughout the research process (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). I recognized that I held the power to decide which individuals met criteria for my study and which individuals were excluded from this study. In efforts to lessen the power imbalance between my chosen participants and myself, I made a conscious effort to establish rapport, employ cautious use of self-disclosure, and be open about my duties and obligations as the researcher (Harrison, MacGibbon, & Morton, 2001). I also maintained a conscious awareness about how my values influenced the research process.

A constructivist paradigm views the researcher’s values as being an integral component of the research process and outcome (Creswell, 2007; Lincoln et al., 2011).

My values best fit with those of feminism, in that I placed a high emphasis on creating collaborative and fair relationships with my participants (Creswell, 2007). As a female graduate student in a counseling psychology doctoral program, I valued the role that social justice advocacy plays in an unjust society. Furthermore, as an individual who has conducted advocacy work for social justice causes, I was well aware of the importance of engaging in self-care. In my own experiences, I have learned that receiving emotional support from friends or colleagues has enhanced my motivation to engage in advocacy work, and a lack of support has resulted in a decrease of motivation. Although this may not fit for other individuals, these experiences influenced my interest in conducting this study. I further address how my values impacted the process of this study in the *Researcher as Instrument* section after discussing the *Research Design*.

### Research Design

I chose to conduct this qualitative study based on the methods of grounded theory (Glaser, 1978, 1992; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss, 1987; Strauss & Corbin, 1990, 1998). Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss developed this research methodology while studying terminally ill patients in hospital settings (see Glaser & Strauss, 1965, 1968) to further learn how patients understood and responded to being told they were dying (Charmaz, 2006). Since its development, grounded theory has been prominent in fields such as education, psychology, nursing, and sociology (Creswell, 2007).

The purpose of grounded theory is to create a conceptual model or theory that is “grounded” in participants’ lived experiences (Fassinger, 2005). Fassinger (2005) best described grounded theory as follows:

Theory is derived inductively through an iterative, concurrent process of data collection, coding, conceptualizing, and theorizing, wherein new data are constantly compared to emerging concepts until no new themes, categories, or relationships are being discovered, at which point the properties of, and relationships among, constructs are specified in the form of a substantive theory about the social behavior under investigation (p. 157).

The present study approached grounded theory from the perspectives of Strauss and Corbin (1990) and Charmaz (2006), who argued for using a grounded theory approach with a constructivist paradigm (Charmaz, 2006). Charmaz asserted that theories are constructed among interactions with people, perceptions, and research processes. According to Charmaz, “Research participants’ implicit meanings, experiential views - and researchers’ finished grounded theories - are constructions of reality” (p. 10). Following the general components of grounded theory (Charmaz, 2006; Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1990), I composed and compared analytic codes and categories throughout the stages of analysis as they emerged from the data through analytic memo writing. I generated a theoretical model that illustrated a core category connecting themes derived from participants’ experiences. The purpose of memo writing was to compare codes and categories as they were created and generate ideas about the newly developing codes. Data collection and analysis informed one another “through an emergent iterative process” that served to further guide future data collection (Charmaz, 2006, p. 360). Thus, grounded theory was an interactive process in which I continually interacted with my, data, codes, and categories.

An advantage of using grounded theory for studies of social justice inquiry is that it allows researchers to formulate interpretations about processes that occur in the world, such as discriminatory actions encountered by underrepresented populations, and provide analysis that portrays the *how* and *why* these processes occur (Charmaz, 2011). A second

advantage to using grounded theory for social justice studies is that it allows researchers to understand implicit meanings and actions within a certain phenomenon and generate explanations, which permits them to “see beyond the obvious” (Charmaz, 2011, p. 361). According to Charmaz, identifying information beyond the surface is a task for social justice researchers. Lastly, grounded theory enhances the understanding of how individuals and groups of people are affected differently by inequalities and power (Charmaz, 2011). The advantages for using grounded theory for social justice inquiry add depth and greater insight to understanding human behavior, and served the present study by further explaining how and why (or if) female counseling psychology graduate students and counseling psychologists engaged in social justice advocacy incorporated self-care into their lives.

It is imperative that qualitative researchers reflect on how their role impacts the research process as a result of the large extent to which they are interactive with participants throughout the various stages of the research design. I describe my role as an instrument in the research design in the following section.

#### Researcher as Instrument

Qualitative researchers take explicit measures to acknowledge how their biases and values influence the research process (Creswell, 2007). This qualitative study was conducted within a constructivist paradigm, which views the relationship between researcher and participants as a critical component to constructing theory (Guba & Lincoln, 2005). Therefore, I further elaborate on the nature of reflexivity as it pertains to qualitative research.

Charmaz (2006) defined researcher reflexivity as methods describing how the researcher chose to think about her or his research experience, how decisions and interpretations were formulated, and how the researcher's interests and assumptions influenced the research process (Charmaz, 2006). Reflexivity informs the readers about how and why the researcher developed her/his research question(s), describes the rationale that led to choosing the designated research design and sampling criteria, and explains the biases and assumptions that could possibly impact data analysis (Charmaz, 2006; Creswell, 2007; Marshall & Rossman, 2006). In the following section, I describe in detail how my experiences led to formulating the topic of inquiry for this study. I also describe my rationale for using a grounded theory approach and how this affected sampling procedures and data analysis. To ensure that my voice is not the dominant voice as this study takes shape (Guba & Lincoln, 2005), I reflect on methods to ensure that I honored the voices of my participants. Lastly, I discuss how my biases and preconceived assumptions about my topic of inquiry impacted my research, and I identify methods to maintain awareness about this subjectivity.

### Researcher Reflexivity

The present study was intended to add to the literature on social justice in counseling psychology. I chose to focus my inquiry in this domain as a result of my interests, passions, and curiosity regarding social justice policy and activism. I first encountered the term *social justice* during my junior year of college, when I volunteered at the University of Missouri-Columbia's Women's Resource Center. This volunteer experience connected me to my university's Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transsexual Center

and the Rape Education Center, where I worked with a large group of graduate and undergraduate students engaged in social justice events. These students identified as queer, feminist (some radical), straight, gay, and bisexual individuals. They were dedicated to learning about social justice causes, creating progressive change, and educating others about the impact of political ideologies and social oppressions. In their quest for political change, these individuals embraced me and my process of learning about the world from a socio-political standpoint.

At the same time that I connected with these social justice advocates, I was also engaged in a self-reflective regimen that involved receiving individual therapy, journaling, and taking courses aligned with my interests in Psychology, Women's Studies, and Theater. These courses enhanced my understanding from what little information I knew about social and political ideologies and their impact on human behavior. In addition, my journey of self-discovery led to a greater awareness of how these ideologies had impacted my childhood upbringing in ways that were affecting my wellbeing. Such academic and personal growth experiences inspired my interest to actively work towards creating progressive change. I participated in organized events such as the university Rape Education Center's *Take Back the Night* march and *Speak Out* event and performed in the university's production of *The Vagina Monologues*. At an individual level, I combined my passion for playwriting and social justice by submitting two plays called *Hero* and *Tampon Man!* to the Missouri Playwrights Series. Both plays used humor to communicate messages about healthy relationships through theatrical entertainment performed on campus. My interest in social justice evolved from the experiences of self-discovery, academic coursework, volunteer work, and participation in

campus events promoting social justice causes. I chose to pursue a career in counseling psychology for its richness in diversity and commitment to social justice. Upon moving to Utah to pursue my doctorate in Counseling Psychology at the University of Utah, I connected with the university's Women's Resource Center by actively serving as co-president of PEERs (People Educating to End Rape), performed in the University of Utah's 2010 production of *The Vagina Monologues*, and walked in Pride parades in downtown Salt Lake City. I have sought out elective courses in topics pertaining to multiculturalism and social justice, such as Dr. Paul White's Prejudice and Stereotypes course, and Dr. Donna Hawxhurst's Feminist Multicultural Therapy course. I have been excited to combine my interest in social justice with my academic background to study the methods by which female social justice advocates nurture and support their wellbeing.

My interests in studying self-care stem from experiencing challenges to balance coursework, clinical work, research, teaching demands, rest, and quality family time as a graduate student for the past 11 years. While working as a student therapist at the Rape Recovery Center, I conducted community presentations on supporting primary and secondary survivors of sexual assault. As a doctoral candidate who has had to minimize my commitments to social justice causes in order to focus my time and energy on graduate studies, I began wondering how other social justice advocates find balance to pursue causes that interfered with their other obligations. My curiosity led to exploring the literature on self-care for social justice advocates and finding little information specific to this population. I therefore chose to pursue this topic as a way to enhance the literature on self-care for female advocates.



I approached this study as a middle-class White woman with a bachelor's degree in psychology, a master's degree in counseling, and nine years of academic study in a counseling psychology doctorate program. As a female graduate student in counseling psychology, I have similarities with my participants, which include a shared history of gender oppression and having the privilege of an educated background. I took great strides to ensure that, despite our similarities, I did not mold their experiences into a model that was more sculpted to fit my experiences.

I was born into privilege, which, by nature, keeps me relatively safe and experiencing mostly positive encounters with strangers, more so than do people of color. For example, I do not have to worry about my race or ethnicity being viewed as the cause for my shortcomings or areas of struggle (McIntosh, 1998). As a White researcher, I was aware that some of my participants might hesitate to trust me or wonder what I would do with the confidential information that was revealed during interviews. I respected such concerns by disclosing how information would be used in the study, allowed participants to choose pseudonyms to protect anonymity, and provided informed consent in advance about the nature and purpose of study. I also shared my appreciation for their openness and used self-disclosure interventions to create a sense of safety and enhance rapport during appropriate moments throughout interviews. In addition to understanding how privileged statuses impacted my study, I was also aware of my preconceived assumptions prior to collecting data. I describe these assumptions, and then discuss methods that I used in my efforts to address subjectivity.

I anticipated one source of self-care to emerge from the data would be support from family, friends, and colleagues. This assumption was a result of findings that I

encountered in the literature on self-care and through personal experiences. One personal experience that I will briefly explain involved participating in an event eight years ago about which I had reservations beforehand. I was choosing to walk in the Pride parade in Salt Lake City to fulfill a course requirement that involved participating in one social justice event prior to the end of the semester. I had concerns of walking alone in a parade where I might encounter antigay protestors shouting profanities or resorting to violent measures. However, I felt a huge sense of relief both physically and emotionally after realizing that one of my peers was also participating in the parade. Walking alongside a friend created a feeling of safety that enhanced my confidence to face whatever encounters laid ahead in the parade. I learned that having the support of those individuals with whom I walked, despite my lack of familiarity with them, also contributed to feeling more confident when participating in this event. Since that experience, I have chosen to participate in the parade for the past seven years. This experience led me to think that my participants would identify *support from others* as a source of self-care. When participants discussed this topic, I was certain to explore the impact of receiving such support and how participants suspected that lacking support would impact their behaviors, and I provided space to allow participants to share their perspectives without direction.

This last method of ensuring that participants' voices were accounted for throughout the study also fit with my second assumption, the nature of spirituality in self-care. My own spirituality has influenced my interests in pursuing social justice work. I assumed that religion and / or spirituality would emerge as a form of self-care, and therefore held the bias that spirituality or affiliation with a religion would have more

positive than negative impacts on my participants. Through the study, I monitored how this bias impacted the interview process, which I describe in the section on *Subjectivity*.

Another bias I held included the main purpose for why I conducted this study: to complete the dissertation requirement for a doctoral program in counseling psychology. A positive outcome to this bias was that I strived to create a strong qualitative study by adequately following all methodology procedures and remained engaged in consultation with my chair to ensure the strength of this study. However, a negative outcome to completing this study for the purpose of satisfying a graduate program requirement was that my study was time-limited, and I served as the sole researcher who decided when and how participants were engaged in the analytic process. The tasks I took to ensure that the voices of participants were represented are discussed in the next section.

### Subjectivity

Qualitative researchers recognize that data and the process of collecting data are “grounded in subjectivity” (Morrow, 2005). To manage subjectivity and remain aware of any additional assumptions or biases that arose during the research process, I maintained a self-reflective journal. Morrow (2005) suggested that self-reflective journals are effective tools that allow qualitative researchers to maintain ongoing documentation of their reactions, experiences, and awareness of their assumptions and biases, which may or may not be incorporated into the analysis. As the principal researcher, I was very aware of my internal processes regarding self-care throughout this journey of searching for the meaning of self-care. I reflected on such experiences in my journal. I describe this self-reflective process under *Sources of Data*.

In addition to maintaining a self-reflective journal, I participated in a bi-monthly 2-hour peer research team that was organized by my dissertation chair, a leading expert in qualitative research, Dr. Susan Morrow. I used such time to consult with peers about my methodology procedures and sought out additional interpretations and perspectives regarding my data to challenge and enhance my own interpretations (Morrow, 2005). The general purpose of managing subjectivity is to obtain the goal of *fairness*, which involves “representing participant viewpoints equitably and avoiding lopsided interpretations that represent the biases of the researcher or only a few participants” (Morrow, 2005, p. 255). In the following section, I discuss my participants and recruitment process.

### Participants

I obtained a diverse range of female counseling psychologists and female graduate students in counseling psychology programs across the United States who self-identified as social justice advocates and engaged in social justice work. Social justice work of counseling psychologists has been described as “scholarship and professional action designed to change societal values, structures, policies, and practices, such that disadvantaged or marginalized groups gain increased access to these tools of self-determination” (Goodman et al., 2004, p. 795). For my study, I sought participants who believed their efforts fell within the parameters of this conceptualization of social justice work. Goodman et al. (2004) also proposed that social justice work occurs on three levels: micro, meso, and macro. I therefore included participants who were engaged in social justice work on many levels. I found my data reached saturation among the 17 participants, which is best described as:

“When no new information is being discovered about the categories or their properties, when the categories are dense and complex enough to capture all of the variations in participants’ experiences, and when the relationships among categories have been delineated satisfactorily” (Fassinger, 2005, p. 160).

Participants were provided with a demographics document to complete and return to me before the start of the interview (see Appendix B). Seventeen participants were included in the study, seven graduate students and 10 psychologists. Twelve participants reported gender as “female,” two participants described gender as “woman,” another two participants reported “Cis-gender woman or Cis female,” and one participant identified gender as “transgender woman.” The ages of participants ranged from 24 to 63. More specifically, seven of the participants’ ages ranged from 24 to 29, two of the participants’ ages ranged from 33 to 34, six of the participants’ ages ranged from 42 to 48 years old, and two participants’ ages ranged from 62 to 63 years old. Nine participants described race as, “European American, White, Caucasian, Caucasian / Irish American, or White and Jewish.” Three participants identified race as “African American / Mixed Heritage; Black / African American and White; or Black.” One participant identified race as “Indian, Human,” while another participant described race as “Mexican American”; and a third participant described race as “White & Native American (Tohono O’odham).” Furthermore, one participant described her race as “Asian Indian,” and another defined her race as “Cuban American.” One participant also added a category to her demographics form titled “Ethnicity,” which she reported as “Latina.”

Of the 17 participants, nine identified their sexual orientation as “heterosexual” or “straight.” Four participants identified sexual orientations as “lesbian.” The remaining four participants defined their sexual orientation as “Queer/ Fluid; bent Queer, in a Heterosexual Relationship; In a Long-term Relationship with a Woman; and Prefer Not

to Label.” The demographics form also inquired about participants’ socioeconomic status growing up (Growing up SES) and their current socioeconomic status (Current SES). Eight participants identified Growing up SES as “Lower Middle Class, Low Blue-Collar, Working Class, and Low Middle Class - High Lower Class. Six participants reported “Middle Class,” and three participants reported “Upper – Middle Class.” Current socioeconomic status (Current SES) was described by 10 participants as “Middle Class or Middle to lower middle class; Depends on Which Theory One is Using with Regard to Definition.” Four participants described Current SES as “Working Class, Under \$19,000 per year – able to meet all basic needs, Low SES, Working (with social capitol, grad student).” Three participants described their Current SES as “Upper Middle, Professional / Upper-Middle class, and Upper-Middle/ Professional.”

Sixteen participants identified their Country of Origin and Current Citizenship as the United States of America or “American.” One participant identified her Country of Origin as Japan/ United States of America, and her Current Citizenship as Dual Japanese and American. Participants identified the following states as current geographic locations: Boston, Georgia, Pennsylvania, Utah, Texas, Indiana, California, Tennessee, Missouri, Illinois, and Arkansas. All participants were given an informed consent document (see Appendix D). In addition, they provided pseudonyms to replace original names in the write-up of this study. Table 1 provides a visual representation of demographics pertaining to each participant. In an effort to give readers some context of quotes stated by participants without jeopardizing confidentiality, demographics in table 1 are limited to age, race / ethnicity, and status in counseling psychology program.

### Sampling Procedures

In qualitative research, data are viewed as “evidence” for the phenomena under investigation (Polkinghorne, 2005). I recruited participants using the tenets of purposeful sampling, which involved selecting participants who had experienced the phenomenon I would be investigating (Polkinghorne, 2005). Because the interest of qualitative studies is the experience itself instead of how it unfolds across populations, purposeful sampling aims at selecting participants “who can provide substantial contributions to filling out the structure and character of the experience under investigation” (Polkinghorne, 2005, p. 139). Patton (2002) described purposeful sampling as the researcher seeking out “information-rich cases from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the inquiry” (p. 273). Under the principles of purposeful sampling, the researcher still must decide who should be included in the sample and the number of participants that should be sampled (Creswell, 2007). I used criterion-based maximum variation sampling to identify a sample that was as demographically diverse as I could obtain within the constraints and limitations of recruitment (Fassinger, 2005). For the intent of my study, I sought female counseling psychologists and graduate students who were engaged in social justice work, as defined by Goodman et al. (2004), to enrich understanding of how they conceptualized self-care in their lives. Purposeful sampling and criterion-based maximum variation sampling were achieved through my attendance at the 2014 *Counseling Psychology In Action Conference* that took place in Atlanta, GA. As an attendee and presenter, I attended numerous workshops and presentations on Women in Leadership and Social Justice in Counseling Psychology, conducted by female graduate students and female counseling psychologists. Based on presentation content

and brief introductions by presenters, I approached certain women after attending their presentations to describe my study and invite them as participants. Eight participants were recruited for my study through this approach.

I used purposeful snowball sampling to further advance my recruitment process. Purposeful snowball sampling involved identifying additional participants through referrals by previously identified participants (Creswell, 2007). At the *Counseling Psychology in Action* Conference, I asked participants and individuals who expressed interest in my study to pass along my contact information to individuals whom they saw fit to participate in this study. In addition, at the end of interviews that occurred months after the conference, I reiterated my need for additional participants. Two participants were recruited through the use of purposeful snowball sampling.

### Recruitment

Participants who met the criteria of identifying as female, being currently enrolled in a counseling psychology program or having a doctorate degree in counseling psychology, and being or having been engaged in social justice advocacy at the micro, meso, or macro levels were invited to participate in the study. I gained entry into this field as 1) a current female graduate student in an APA - accredited counseling psychology program, 2) a member of Division 35 (The Society for the Psychology of Women) of the American Psychological Association, and 3) having a shared interest in creating progressive change and having conducted social justice work on college campuses and within community organizations. In addition, my chair served as a gatekeeper to this population as a distinguished female professor in counseling



psychology who has served as an activist for social issues and on various APA Division committees spanning the past 40 years. Lastly, the peer research team that I was involved in for the past eight years contained graduate students who were engaged in social justice work. I sought their feedback for the recruitment process.

In addition to recruiting participants through attendance at the *Counseling Psychology in Action* conference and the use of purposeful snowball sampling, participants responded to an announcement sent through the Council of Counseling Psychology Training Programs (CCPTP) listserv by my chair, Dr. Susan Morrow. After the information regarding my study was sent out on this listserv I received emails from individuals asking to participate in the study. Seven participants were recruited by this approach.

### Researcher Roles and Relationships to Participants

As a qualitative researcher, data collection was dependent on my interactions with participants and organizations from which my participants were recruited, such as Division 35. I strived to form collaborative, safe, and respectful relationships with participants and organizations to ensure that they benefited from taking part in this study. In my efforts to do so, I was direct and open about the reasons I was conducting the study. I explained the possibility that my results may be published in a peer-reviewed journal. I answered all questions about the Informed Consent. Additionally, I remained attentive to each relationship that I formed with my participants. I found at least one topic in common with every participant that enhanced our relationship. For example, briefly mentioning that I attended the *Bella Abzug National Leadership Conference for Women*

*and Girls* in New York City nine years ago helped me connect with a participant who identified Bella Abzug as an inspirational Jewish woman. A second example is when a participant disclosed her struggles about having no support as a single mother in graduate school, I offered to connect her to my friend and cohort member who was a single mother throughout her graduate school career. It was important for me to demonstrate to my participants that I was following their stories not only as a researcher but also as a human being who heard their struggles.

### Taking Leave

I illustrated my respect for my participants and our relationships by leaving this study in a manner that conveyed my sincere appreciation for their commitment to the research. In addition to expressing my gratitude for their willingness to participate openly during extensive interviews, I also informed them of how they could hear more about the results of the study by inviting participants to my dissertation defense and providing them with my cell phone number to contact me if they had any questions or concerns after our last encounter. In addition, I will send a synopsis of the results when preparing the report for publication. I further elaborate on the role of the participants and my sources of data in the following section.

### Sources of Data

As is common in qualitative research, I collected data using multiple sources. This process, known as *triangulation*, is similar to establishing validity in quantitative studies (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Multiple perspectives of the phenomenon under investigation

are obtained through triangulation (Marshall & Rossman, 2006), which enhances the possibility of gathering rich data necessary to create grounded theories (Charmaz, 2006). The multiple data sources that I used included individual interviews, participant observations, and maintaining a self-reflective journal. I will elaborate on each source in the following sections.

### Individual Interviews

Conducting individual interviews is a common primary data source in counseling psychology (Morrow, 2007) and is often used in qualitative research (Charmaz, 2006; Kvale, 1996; Polkinghorne, 2005). Interviews are also appropriate to use with grounded theory methods because both “are open-ended yet directed, shaped yet emergent, and paced yet unrestricted” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 28). The purpose of these interviews was to describe the central themes of my participants’ experiences of self-care and to understand the meanings behind their descriptions (Kvale, 1996), using their language (Charmaz, 2006). Interviews were conducted face-to-face through video conferencing via the Internet and by telephone to connect with local and national participants. I conducted 17 individual semistructured interviews using a guide. Using a semistructured interview guide allows researchers to focus more on the participants and less on asking the next question, while also allowing for exploration and in-depth responses (Charmaz, 2006). Following Charmaz’s (2006) guidelines, I digitally recorded every interview to allow for transcription and accuracy checks. Recording interviews allowed me to give full attention to participants and maintain respectful eye contact while collecting in-depth data (Charmaz, 2006). Interviews were transcribed by me and a professional transcription

company called Tech Synergy, which was trained in confidentiality and research ethics. I reviewed all transcripts while listening to their respective recordings to ensure the accuracy of the transcript. In addition to recording all interviews, I engaged in minimal note-taking during and after the interviews to help frame additional questions (Charmaz, 2006). Notes written after interviews mostly pertained to observations (Polkinghorne, 2005).

I created a safe and supportive environment for every participant by conducting interviews in ways that resembled normal conversations (Kvale, 1996). I did so by listening intently to their verbal descriptions while also interpreting their underlying meanings, and I asked follow-up questions as necessary (Kvale, 1996). To obtain knowledge about my participants' experiences, I asked questions pertaining to situations and actions rather than opinions (Kvale, 1996). To honor the voices of my participants, I presented myself as a "curious" interviewer who "was sensitive to what was said and what was not said," and I worked to remain aware of my own beliefs and assumptions (Kvale, 1996, p. 33). Being aware of the interpersonal dynamic between each participant and me, while remembering that the interview process might have a significant impact on participants, was necessary to ensure the safety of their experiences (Kvale, 1996).

Prior to asking the interview questions, I asked participants to choose a pseudonym that was included in the presentation of the final narrative. The following list of questions served as an initial guide for the interview process to study my participants' perspectives and individual experiences (Charmaz, 2006). In attempts to make my interviews informal and conversational, these questions were modified and follow-up questions included to account for emerging data (Charmaz, 2006; Kvale, 1996).

Social Justice Questions:

- 1) Tell me about yourself as a social justice advocate.

Cues (To be asked if participant does not include these in her answer to the question above):

- a. What kind of work do you do as a social justice advocate?
- b. What challenges do you encounter while advocating for social causes or participating in social justice work?
- c. What benefits or rewards do you gain from doing this type of work?

Self-Care Questions:

- 2) How do you define *self-care*?
- 3) In what ways do you engage in self-care in your daily life?
- 4) What are the benefits to doing self-care?
- 5) What challenges do you encounter in engaging in self-care?
- 6) Do you have positive or negative role-models in your life that you attribute to self-care?
- 7) What are your opinions about using substances (alcohol, smoking, etc.) for self-care?

Self-Care and Social Justice Advocacy Questions:

- 8) When you encounter difficulties while advocating for social causes or participating in social justice work, how do you address them?
  - a. Who or what helps you to overcome such struggles?
- 9) As you reflect on your experiences as a social justice advocate, what events stand out in your mind that illustrate your use of self-care?

Cue: Have any organizations or groups of people been a source of self-care for you? If so, how so?

10) Do you see your sense of purpose in life related to social justice? How does that relate to self-care?

11) Do any metaphors, images, or artwork come to mind when you think of self-care related to social justice advocacy?

Concluding Questions:

12) What else would you like to share about your role as a social justice advocate in relation to self-care?

13) Is there anything I didn't ask you that you think I should ask participants in this study? (If person provides a suggestion, ask her to respond to that suggestion).

### Participant Observations

The process of recording observations about participants is recommended in qualitative research (Morrow, 2005) to complement the data gathered in interviews (Polkinghorne, 2005). Qualitative researchers acknowledge that the researcher is both an observer and a participant in the study (Spradley, 1980). I was a participant-observer in this study – a participant as a current graduate student in a counseling psychology program who also identified as a social justice advocate. As a social justice activist and female graduate student, I brought my experiences, knowledge, and beliefs about the investigated phenomenon to the study. I remained aware of my internal processes that involved experiencing some of the same emotions as those expressed by my participants

(Spradley, 1980). I was also an observer in this study as the sole researcher asking questions and making observations that were used in the analysis. I am therefore both an “insider and outsider simultaneously” throughout this process (Spradley, 1980, p. 57). More than half of my interviews occurred over the phone, where only voice tones and language were observed. I therefore recorded observations of voice tones and language for these interviews. I recorded facial expressions for the five interviews conducted in person or by Skype (Polkinghorne, 2005). I recorded observations immediately following the interviews. Participant observations were kept separate from a reflective journal, which I will describe in the following section.

### Reflective Journal

My last source for data collection involved maintaining a personal journal where I recorded thoughts, emotions, and any significant reactions that occurred during this study. Recording such experiences in a personal journal helped me examine the extent to which my decisions and interpretations influenced the study, and provided more insights on my relationships with participants (Charmaz, 2006). Reflecting on my process throughout the study for the purpose of remaining aware of how I arrived at my interpretations was consistent with the values of constructivist grounded theorists (Charmaz, 2006). As a participant-observer (Spradley, 1980), I was open and aware of when I experienced emotions that were similar to or different from those expressed by my participants. The following are examples of journal entries:

“NVivo is up and running. I’m now worried about how I can save data other than within the NVivo server. I swear I’m the type of woman who will search for something to worry about if nothing shows up, which it always does. I suspect that has to do with 10 years of graduate school and being so close to graduation.

However, things are good. Just finished coding a long interview (participant 1) in NVivo which also helped me learn the program. Now I plan to listen to and transcript-check participant 2 so that I can begin coding my second transcript. I feel like I have more momentum now than before.

I find it interesting to be reading about other people's interactions with self-care as I am also in the process of managing my own self-care. It's becoming very important to remain aware of how much better I function as an intern when I take time for myself. So taking off 3 days last week to hike in Zion and Arches was a fantastic decision. I realized that my own self-care blossoms with fresh air, being near and surrounded by earth and sunlight, and movement. I felt peace and at ease at the top of Angel's Landing, the bottom of The Narrows, and lying down under Delicate Arch. I wonder how my connection to Momma Earth will match or not match with those participants who discuss "Nature" as self-care. ("Nature" is an over-arching category at this time.)

I also learned a few days ago that saying "no" to a colleague who has asked me several times to do some grocery shopping for her because she has no car was difficult but a huge relief. After seeing four clients plus two intakes between 9am-3pm, and after experiencing re-triggering emotions from the night before regarding an interpersonal issue, the last thing I needed was to feel any responsibility for this chick to get "specific" food that she wants. She wouldn't even accept the idea of taking a bus or taxi. I was frustrated for having been asked a third or fourth time to do some grocery shopping for her; this time her list included 9 items, having had no incentives or favors returned to me, and hearing her expectations that I wouldn't mind. Well, I did mind. And I didn't dare apologize because it's ok to say no to favors. That's my self-care and I'm sticking to it.

I just spent 3 solid hours finishing up the coding of participant 1. I'm going to eat dinner and try to return to listen to (at least) 30 min of transcript 2 and check for accuracy on the transcript. On I go!" [May 31, 2015].

I also reflected on my thought process that was influenced by participant responses. One example is from my September 11, 2015 entry:

"Line 766, same participant is talking about how she is "lucky" to have a partner to cook healthy meals for her – I think this is privilege. How does privilege impact self-care? Wish I had a partner to cook for me! For me, how does privilege impact this research? I think by using an educated group of women with resources connected to that identity (i.e., college gym access, therapy at low cost, employee benefits,) this research may be missing how SC changes for people of lower incomes."

Finally, my entry on November 12, 2015 illustrated my awareness of how I experienced participant content in relation to my biases. "



Currently coding Participant # 15 transcript. She stated, “We can’t solve everything on our own” in the context of religion as self-care. All other participants have discussed this issue, not necessarily related to Higher Power. I think a category could be “Support” broken down into external (friends, family, colleagues) and internal (religion). I enjoyed how she spoke of spirituality – a deity or Just God – as self-care. I wonder how my Catholic background may bias anything in analysis? I know she used specific terms like “deity” or “Just God,” and “God,” but not terms I usually refer to when speaking of religion, such as “Christ” or Jesus.” So I will be sure to stick with her language. Also will pay attention to anything related to religion (for or against it) as I continue with analyzing and coding.”

### Data Analysis and Writing

The following sections describe the processes for data management, data analysis, and writing the final product.

#### Data Management

Data were collected, stored, and analyzed in an organized and systematic manner. I recorded all interviews using an audio recording device called the Zoom H4n 4-Channel Handy Recorder on Camera DSLR Audio. I electronically uploaded interview files from the Zoom H4n device to the secure website of Tech Synergy, and transcripts were electronically returned within three to five business days to my secure University of Utah email account. Two interviews were transcribed by an undergraduate student from the University of Utah after she was approved through the Institutional Review Board (IRB) office. She was provided with two audio files that were uploaded on her computer through a personal USB Drive, then electronically sent to my university email account. I reviewed these transcripts prior to initial coding. The interviews that I transcribed were typed into Microsoft Word documents, then checked for accuracy by simultaneously

listening to interviews and reading transcripts. To ensure that data were not lost or destroyed, I saved the transcripts in two locations, on my personal password-protected laptop and an external hard drive. I also purchased a back-up storage software program called *Carbonite* to back-up my computer hard drive.

I used analytic memos to make notes and form questions about codes, categories, and their conceptual relationships (Charmaz, 2006). Using analytic memos helped me analyze ideas pertaining to codes and the data, strengthen such ideas at a deeper abstract level, and enhance my awareness about comparisons and connections that I formulated (Charmaz, 2006). I also used memos to monitor my investigative process (Fassinger, 2005; Morrow & Smith, 2000).

Lastly, I generated codes from the transcripts and organized them using a computer-assisted program, *NVivo*, which allowed me to better organize codes and categories in electronic format. This software was designed specifically for qualitative data analysis and provided methods for storing memos, codes, concepts, and categories. Computer programs such as this have been known to allow qualitative researchers to store multiple sources of data in an organized and meaningful manner (Corbin & Strauss, 2008) and to assist in data analysis. I decided that *NVivo* was most appropriate for my study after consulting with a qualitative researcher and librarian who worked at my university library. The process of deriving codes, categories, and a core category from the data is further discussed in the following section.

### Data Analysis

This section describes the analytic process of coding data that I employed using a grounded theory approach (Charmaz, 2006; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Strauss and Corbin (1990) defined this approach as follows: “The grounded theory approach is a qualitative research method that uses a systematic set of procedures to develop and inductively derive grounded theory about a phenomenon” (p. 24). According to these methods, theories are developed inductively from the data through a parallel process of collecting data, coding, analyzing, and theorizing (Fassinger, 2005; Morrow & Smith, 2000). Throughout this process, new data are compared to emerging themes and categories until saturation is reached (Charmaz, 2006; Fassinger, 2005; Strauss & Corbin, 1994). Upon reaching saturation, results are then described in the form of a conceptual model, story, or theory (Morrow & Smith, 2000; Strauss & Corbin, 1990) that described the relationships among the categories (Fassinger, 2005). This process of analysis is consistent with a constructivist paradigm (Charmaz, 2006; Ponterotto, 2005; Morrow & Smith, 2000) for its emphasis on how people compose meanings and actions in various social contexts (Charmaz, 2005) through multiple and socially formed realities (Fassinger, 2005). Constructivist paradigms also acknowledge the process of co-creation of meaning between participant and researcher and place a high importance on researcher reflexivity (Fassinger, 2005). Although not always a linear process, grounded theory analysis involves the following steps: initial coding, axial coding, and selective coding (Charmaz, 2006; Fassinger, 2005; Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

I began the analytic process by listening to interviews while simultaneously reading through transcripts to check for accuracy (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). During this

time, I did not write down notes, so that I could “enter vicariously into the life of participants, feel what they are experiencing, and listen to what they are telling us” (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p. 163). Next, I engaged in initial coding, in which I assigned an action-related descriptive word or phrase to segments of data (Charmaz, 2006). Strauss and Corbin (1990) refer to initial coding as *open coding*, when researchers take data apart by assigning a *conceptual label* to events, incidents, or ideas found in paragraphs and observations as a method to conceptualize the data. During the initial coding process, I remained open to creating codes that best fit my data by writing them in a straightforward, specific, and short manner to adequately reflect the data (Charmaz, 2006). Furthermore, I formed codes based line-by-line or incidence-by-incidence, and then moved into comparing the codes with one another (Charmaz, 2006). I incorporated *in vivo* codes in which the language of participants was used in the creation of codes to ensure that I understood the meanings behind the participants’ statements (Charmaz, 2006). By comparing codes with one another, I identified similar and shared concepts among codes, which permitted me to group such codes together to form categories (Fassinger, 2005; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Categories were assigned conceptualized labels that were more abstract than those assigned to codes to illustrate a more in-depth meaning (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). The relationships among categories are discussed in the second phase of coding, known as axial coding.

After taking apart the data through open or initial coding, I then pieced data back together in a different way through axial coding (Charmaz, 2006; Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). I identified relationships among categories and subcategories to generate larger, more extensive categories about self-care (Creswell,

2007). Axial coding expanded the categories to answer questions describing the *why*, *where*, and *when* of the data, thereby restructuring the data in a way that produced richer categories about self-care (Charmaz, 2006; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). I reshaped the data by comparing categories to one another and to subcategories. I also searched for disconfirming evidence that challenged or supported my categories (Fassinger, 2005). I compared these newly designed dense categories to form an overarching core category through selective coding.

The final phrase of coding is referred to as *selective coding*, in which a core category integrating all other categories emerges from the data (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). The in-depth categories formulated through axial coding are compared to one another to form a conceptual model (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). I created a short narrative describing the most salient pieces of my data and their relationships to the core category (Fassinger, 2005). I continued to ask myself questions about the relationships between the core category and previously identified categories to make certain that my analysis was illustrating the experiences of my participants (Fassinger, 2005), and I compared my core category to preexisting literature to enhance understanding (Fassinger, 2005).

This analytic process of grounded theory was accomplished with the assistance of *NVivo*, a computer-assisted program that helped to organize and comprehend data in a meaningful way (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Richards & Richards, 1994); analytic memos to maintain notes and reminders about thought processes regarding codes, categories, and their relationships (Charmaz, 2006); a diagram to illustrate the relationships among categories in a visual form (Strauss & Corbin, 1990); and through my participation in a bimonthly qualitative research group where I obtained feedback to challenge and support

my process of analyzing codes, categories, and their relationships to one another. These strategies supported my process of creating a conceptual model on self-care.

### Writing

The final product emerging from this analysis was a conceptual model that illustrated the experiences of female social justice activists in counseling psychology and their relationship to self-care. Once I grasped the comprehensive understanding of my model, I described it in a narrative format that was inclusive of participants' quotes to adequately represent their experiences. Remaining consistent with a constructivist paradigm, I recorded the number of quotes I used in my final draft from every participant to ensure all participants were represented equally (Lincoln, Lynham, & Guba, 2011

Table 1: Participants' Demographics

	Graduate Student or Psychologist	Age	Race / Ethnicity
Frida	Graduate Student	25	African American / Mixed Heritage
Khela	Graduate Student	27	Indian, Human
Golda	Psychologist	48	European American
Mollie	Psychologist	44	Caucasian / Irish American
Bear	Psychologist	62	Caucasian
Diana	Psychologist	42	White and Jewish
Anna	Graduate Student	25	Caucasian
Elizabeth	Psychologist	63	White
Bad Ass Professor	Psychologist	43	Mexican American
Virginia	Graduate Student	27	White / Euro American
Anais	Graduate Student	24	Black
Ada	Psychologist	42	White / Native American (Tohono O'odham)
Hope	Graduate Student	29	White
Maya	Psychologist	33	Black / African American and White
Person J	Psychologist	34	Asian Indian
Sam	Graduate Student	24	European American
Latalia	Psychologist	44	Cuban American

## CHAPTER III

### RESULTS

#### Overview

The purpose of this research was to explain how women in counseling psychology engage in self-care to overcome obstacles related to social justice work. Participants were women psychologists and female graduate students in counseling psychology who identify as social justice activists. Participants were recruited from the 2014 *Counseling Psychology in Action* conference, online listserv for Training Directors, and purposeful snowball sampling. Through semistructured interviews, participants discussed their unique experiences of engaging in self-care practices as social justice agents of change. In consideration of these data, I developed a conceptual model to illustrate participants' use of self-care and methods to overcome obstacles related to social justice work, also referred to as *activism*. First, I describe the types of social justice work conducted by participants and characteristics of activism. Then I explain four themes of self-care and their relationship to social justice. Lastly, I describe the meaningful relationship between social justice and self-care with a visual diagram illustrating my conceptual model.



### Types of Activism

Throughout the semistructured interviews, participants identified types of activism they were either currently pursuing or which they had conducted in the past. I explicitly asked them to describe themselves as social justice activists. Participants described their roles in activism in relation to academe, community, and global environments.

#### *Activism in Academic Environments*

Participants discussed how social justice is infused in research, service, and teaching in academic environments. Diana illustrated how these three domains are related to her identity as a counseling psychologist. She stated, “Professionally identifying as a counseling psychologist, in the way that my career has evolved so far, so that my teaching and my research and my service, ya know, the three tenets of being a faculty member, are all grounded pretty deeply in social justice activism.”

Most participants discussed their backgrounds in research. Research topics included focusing on multicultural competencies for mental health professionals (Golda), multicultural training with police officers (Hope), reintegrating criminal offenders into the community (Person J), intergroup dialogue and reducing mental health stigma within the Black community (Frida), human trafficking (Mollie), male and female survivors of sexual assault (Anna, Maya), reproductive justice (Diana), accessing resources for healthcare in Rwanda (Khela), and divorced women who lost custody battles to abusive spouses (Golda). Research projects also included focusing on underrepresented populations such as Latinas (Ada); women (Bear, Elizabeth, Diana, Golda); lesbian, gay,

bisexual, and transsexual populations (Anna, Elizabeth, Latalia, Mollie, Virginia); people of color (Ada, Anais, Frida); student parents and youth (Anais); people with disabilities (Elizabeth); and K-12 Latino students (Bad Ass Professor). Both professors and graduate students indicated that research is a form of activism. Diana, a counseling psychologist, stated,

I know it's more research-based, but I feel like it, I feel like it's really activism as well, because it will help, ya know, practitioners, um, who work with girls and women. Um, so, and it's really based, ya know, a lot of it is based in, ya know, intersectionality and the need to consider diversity in our work with girls and women. So, that's, that's how it plays out professionally.

Likewise, graduate students agreed that research is connected to activism. Frida, a graduate student of color, stated, "You know clearly I'm in a science, scientist – practitioner model at my university, and I really value that. Um, but I do see my research as a great way for me to engage in social justice activism, so, or advocacy." Hope also stated, "With my research, I'm not too research-focused, but my research is also social justice-focused, so I'm doing multicultural training with the police."

In addition to research, some participants discussed their involvement of service – oriented activism conducted on campus after realizing a need for such activism. Frida described her efforts to reduce Islamophobia after a tragedy in their community inflamed discriminatory attitudes towards Muslims.

I noticed a lot of media coverage that I interpreted as Islamophobic, as discriminatory, as you, know overemphasizing the immigrant identity and Muslim identity. ... And when I saw that the [location] college community kind of celebrated catching the Tsarnaev brothers, or, you know, Jahar Tsarnaev after Tamerlan had already died, I was a little troubled. It was triggering for me because I, it, I just worried about the implications of it. Um, and then I did get to see some of the implications in terms of hate crimes against Muslims and people who may be perceived as Arab or, you know, identify as Muslim in some form. So I collaborated with [Khela] to form an intervention to kind of provide some support for Muslim students who, you know, were experiencing a lot of isolation

in the face of this event. So it started off by just making a banner, and it read, “Don’t Meet Hurt with Hate. Love Islam.”

Virginia’s activism illustrated how personal experiences enhanced her awareness of lack of resources for transgender individuals.

I transitioned about four or five years ago. At least around here in [location], it seemed like most people didn’t know very much about transgender issues. I got involved with the LGBT commission, and I was the only transgender member. And it definitely seemed like everything that they talked about was from a framework that everyone there was just going to be lesbian or gay. And so, especially as I was transitioning, as I found that there was so little information out there, I decided that I needed to do an informational series to educate people formally. So I developed a Transgender 101 Series, and I had multiple parts of it as well. And over the past couple of years, there have been some semesters I’ll do 10 to 12 presentations, mainly just doing a lot of education and awareness surrounding what it means to be a transgender, what are some common issues that transgender people face. Just because I was tired of explaining it myself, I thought it would be just easier to do it formally.

Anna, a co-presenter of Safe Zone trainings and co-coordinator of a 4-hour workshop specific to training on transsexual populations, also conducts trainings on sexual violence to college students. As a graduate student providing clinical services at her university counseling center, Anna described how working with survivors of sexual assault enhanced her awareness of a need to support this population.

I was starting to realize that there were a lot of things that survivors need on campus that, um, they’re not providing, um, or they’re not getting, and a lot of prevention work that needs to happen on campus that, um, was not happening. So I got involved with the sexual threats oppression prevention team on campus, and we do this thing called “The Talk Show,” where we go into classrooms, and we put on presentations throughout campus... So, what it is, is, we do a mock, like, talk show like Ellen or Oprah, um, where we would have panel members, one being a survivor and one being a, um, the perpetrator, and try to have students interact with us and figure things out for themselves as to, ya know, what sexual assault really is. Because I think a lot of people think of sexual assault as, ya know, somebody in a dark alley, pushing the girl down; and, you know, we don’t, we don’t talk about things like that stuff in the media. We don’t talk about males getting sexually assaulted in the media.

Anais also described how she identified a need to support students who have

children during her work at her university's women's resource center.

I got to the Women's Center and I started working with student parents. It started with four moms sitting down at the conference table, telling me their woes; and, you know, by the end of my stint here, we have 40 plus families that we can get in the Women's Center to build community; and we're working with resources in the [location] community, the Health Department, First Chance for Children, the library, and things like that, you know, just to really make sure that some of our families' basic needs are met, you know.

Elizabeth described how social justice played out in her work in an administrator position in academics.

I can't really think of anything that I have done in the last couple of decades that was not somehow organized around a social justice agenda broadly defined. I can't think of a single thing. I mean, when I think about, even for example in, you know, like, as a dean, you have to manage budget well. I mean, there are considerations that go into what you advocate for in your budgeting. And so, you advocate, for example, for programs that have large numbers or recruit large numbers of under-represented students. I mean, that's a way that you can have impact, even as an academic administrator.

Latalia illustrated how working as a psychologist in a university setting provided opportunities to advocate for LGBT students.

And so, then, as a psychologist, I think that that it became sort of another spring board -- like a place or platform to be able to use my voice in a different way, and so it make sense that I went into this... And so, so I think that the way that I have infused it here is not only in the way that probably a lot of people talk about it that are psychologists, like multicultural counseling and all that kind of stuff, but I started for instance, the first Pride organization here at [location] in 2000. I started the ally Safe Zone program here for that university. So, just creating spaces, and I started the diversity institute we've had now for 16 years.

Teaching courses was also identified as activism within academic environments.

Diana described how activism is visible through her interests in training future counseling psychologists.

I teach our program's graduate multicultural course. I've also taught that at the undergraduate level. Um, and so, there's a lot of activism in my teaching, just in terms of trying to imbue the next generation of counseling psychologists with those same values, with understanding things systemically and structurally.

Anais explained how she integrated social justice topics into the courses she taught.

I talked about positionality and privilege a lot when I teach identity development. And I realized that a lot of people are still ignorant to that. This idea that, like, “I have a positionality and then that impacts the way I view myself, the way the world views me and the way I move through certain spaces.”

Hope illustrated how certain courses are already infused with social justice.

I teach in African-American studies so it’s pretty much social justice curriculum, right? So that’s easy. I don’t have to change my curriculum to espouse my values.

Additional topics that were taught by participants include Multicultural counseling (Ada, Diana, Person J), Human Sexuality (Diana), courses within the Black Studies or African –American department (Anais, Hope), and teaching in India as part of a fellowship (Khela).

Participants also described types of activism that they were involved in outside of academic environments.

### *Activism Within Community and Global Environments*

Community activism was highly valued by many participants. Hope discussed her experiences as a birth doula to young women in their early 20s, many of whom have a history of trauma or abuse.

I work with them to provide good birth experiences and good starts for their parenting. But I also have to advocate in the hospital, because these women are not treated with respect, they’re not treated -- their behavior responses are not considered within context of their situation. So that’s my community work that I do on the side that I consider to be part of my social justice identity.

Mollie illustrated how community work involved connecting with other professionals to advocate for survivors of sexual abuse and engaging in advocacy at the

national level.

I help people form coalitions to raise awareness about human trafficking and also to provide service coordination for survivors. And I began nine years ago a coalition here in [location] that I still facilitate.... And I deal with folks right away when they're identified in our region and serve as a consultant for folks when they're identified in other areas. Done lobbying. I've done, spoken in front of, governing bodies to try to get them to change an augment law or modify, or create an augment law.

Bear described how community activism is sometimes in response to ignorant actions.

And just last week, something came across the [location] mayor's diversity listserv of a White, pretty sure straight teacher in the community, junior high teacher asking for an ethnic person to come visit his class and talk about their food and their traditions, and their festivals. And one of the women in the group wrote and said, "Can we address this as a group?" Because she was just so livid, and I decided, as a white person, it was really in my job description, as it were, in living in antiracist life, to write a reply.

Before starting graduate school, Khela taught at two different schools in India on a fellowship. She described one class of students as "students that came from an underprivileged school or what would be considered in India school for untouchables," and another class "for international students that were governor's kids and like the kids of the people who are working for UNICEF. It was like totally different groups of people." Upon realizing that the two different schools were within walking distance, Khela

...felt like I could be like a social justice advocate in using my privilege as their teacher in both of these classes to try to, maybe, you know, close the gap that I thought to be the largest. ...So I ended up creating a project where they could come together and um, it ... was a really cool project; and the kids, like, became friends with each other afterwards; and that was so important to me, like, I loved - I love just seeing the friendships that emerged from that, and it was a really cool experience.

Indeed, women in this study had a wealth of experience in social justice work.

Based on their experiences, four general defining characteristics of activism emerged

from the data. These themes are discussed in the following section, Defining Activism.

### Defining Activism

#### *Complications to Defining Activism*

Activist work was described as being broad and vague and challenging to define by participants. As Bad Ass Professor illustrated, terminology can add to the confusion of distinguishing between *activist* and *social justice*. She said, “So, when the term social justice came up, I’m, like, oh, okay. I am considered, according to the terminology, I think, a social justice person. I just never really identify with that, but the things that I do is considered that. So sometimes the terminology throws me off track.” Sam explained how her confusion around defining her role as a social justice activist involved not knowing there were certain criteria that must be met. She said, “I have never really articulated, kind of, my role as a social justice advocate; and even before this conversation, I didn’t even think that I qualified to be a social justice advocate...Because I was, like, well, to be an advocate, I have to go to, like, Washington. I have to be picketing and talking with senators and Congressmen and stuff like that.”

#### *Activism Is Inclusion*

Activism was described by having an overall characteristic of *inclusion* that shows representation across groups. When conducting a study exploring women’s understanding of their sexuality, Diana indicated that she and colleagues made a concerted effort to include marginalized women, queer women, and lower SES women within her study, because “that’s really important, because so much, I think, of research

seems to encompass the experiences of middle and upper-middle class people.” Person J discussed social justice work as related to advocating for a marginalized population often judged by society, criminal offenders, by conducting research on overcoming barriers that prevent criminal offenders from reintegrating into society. When exploring activist work creating safe spaces, Frida indicated that she is interested in giving voice to all marginalized identities, to all people who are constantly experiencing some form of discrimination. Khela described activism as “leveling the playing fields, giving access to resources, and bringing out voices of people that are oppressed by some hierarchy.” Another way of describing activism in relation to inclusion is by giving respect to all populations as well as to one’s self.

I really think that, fundamentally, social justice work, like, at its very, very, very heart, like if you stripped away everything else, it’s about respect. It’s about respect for other people, whoever they are. And, I would add, because I think environmental work is also social justice work, so I think respecting the Earth, respecting the animals. I mean it’s just respecting the planet we live on and all of the people in it. And I think that respecting other people starts with respecting yourself.

Inclusion of individuals from all backgrounds is a defining characteristic of activism. Another defining characteristic that emerged from this data is that activism is an ongoing process.

### *Activism Is Ongoing*

Social justice work is an ongoing process that is never complete. Although activists see completion of their tasks, such as publishing studies and watching students graduate from counseling psychology programs, activism is never finished. As Bear indicated, “there is always more to do.” Ada described activism as an ongoing process by



referring to outcomes of activism.

I mean, clearly, there's a lot of work. And social justice work is going to be constant. ... Sometimes you really never see the fruits of your work. You know what I mean? If you were expecting to see the outcome, I don't think you're, I have never gotten that, necessarily. And when it does happen, it's a surprise. So, I think it's more of a process for me than just an end point. So the teaching, for me, is more about my planting seeds. You know, that's where I get the most outcomes.

Maya described activist work of "taking on injustices" as "fighting in an uphill battle." She said, "That's something that you're not going to change. It's kind of what I think of, and so, you know, I'm going to end racism. Yeah, right, good luck for that."

Diana illustrated how making change involves more than one person. She said "There's no one of us who's gonna change the world singlehandedly." Person J pointed out that activists build on social justice work conducted by individuals who came before them.

It's very unlikely that anyone will solve any of those social ills in their lifetime. And so, you kind of have to trust maybe that's how the world works or the universe works, or should you believe in a deity. However way you see that, that things will go on beyond you. So anyway, I think that sends a purpose, maybe in this finite time at this place, try to solve the best you can; and then, hopefully, someone will come behind you and do an even better job. We're only building on other people's works anyway.

Elizabeth illustrated the impact of working for social justice causes throughout many decades.

And I think for those of us, you know, I'm 62 years old, and I'm a child of Woodstock from back in the day. I think all of us Boomers are sort of facing, as we age, I think we all sort of look at what, the change that we thought we were going to make happen back when we were in our 20s, our teens and our 20s and our 30s. Now, decades later, we're sort of looking at the ways in which so many things have not changed. Obviously, a lot of things have, but there are some basic things that have absolutely not budged one inch in four to five decades. Well, like the gender wage gap, for example. That's been a pretty fixed number for as long as people have been talking about it.

The second defining characteristic of social justice work is that it is ongoing and

builds off the actions of other activists. A third defining characteristic of activism is personal investment.

#### *Activism Involves Personal Investment*

The ongoing process of fighting against social injustices involves a rewarding and emotional investment for activists. Two categories capture the essence of personally investing in activist work: recognizing how activism gives back, and emotional investment.

#### *Activism Gives Back*

Investment within social justice activism varied across types of advocacy work. Teaching in academic, community, or global environments; providing clinical services; facilitating workshops; supervising and training graduate students; organizing or participating in campus events; marching in rallies; and interviewing research participants are examples of activism involving direct contact with individuals. Activism is powerful and meaningful work. Mollie described activism as feeling like “I am making a difference, doing something that is important to me. That I feel like I’m making a difference, and that feels good to me, because that’s a support to me, to not stand by and watch something that’s unfair.” Latalia described her experiences as a cycle of serving others that also serves her wellbeing.

I feel like it’s the working with others and for others, then creates, I feel good about myself. It creates more meaning for my life, like meaning making, it’s positive. Whether I made an impact or not, it doesn’t matter the significant impact, there is an impact. So I think there is a loop in the service of others that ends up servicing me. So it’s like a ripple. Not only for, hopefully, many others, but it also, like, I guess, yeah, it creates meaning in my life.

Elizabeth described her experiences as feeling rightness about her life.

I think internally, you, you, the benefit is that you feel you're doing the right thing. There is rightness about your life. I mean you, if you know there is unfairness, and that's of central importance to you, then you're spending your life trying to, trying to tilt at the windmill of that unfairness, than every time you make any kind of progress at all, or any time you put forth any kind of effort that you're proud of, you feel like you're, you know, you feel like you're making a dent in things, and you're making the world a better place to be. So I think there's that sort of personal satisfaction.

Bad Ass Professor described her experiences as gaining a sense of pride from seeing positive outcomes of her work: "I just get excited when I see other people succeeding and that I had a contribution to that. It's a sense of pride, I get prideful."

Mollie also described the benefits of seeing change happen in her field of activism.

Well I think, directly related to this trafficking work, I think its been really rewarding to see over the past 10 years, like how many more people are aware of it now. ... but its just, I've seen a change. Because of the concerted effort of people, and that's been really cool, to kind of get to witness that change.

Presenting information on the transgender population was a "powerful experience" for Virginia, because it involved "giving myself a voice, and to be able to have people learn more and be able to respond to me better."

This hands-on work also includes forming relationships with individuals, such as students being taught or trained, clients receiving therapy, or members of marginalized populations whom workshops are supporting. These experiences were defined as being enriching and rewarding. Sam described how forming connections by teaching English as a second language in her community was a powerful experience:

Like, meeting new people is another thing, too. Like through my work, I know people, like, all over the city, that I am connected in a variety of different kind of capacities, like, with different people, different schools, and different organizations. And I keep making, like, connections. ...I think, for me, the connections and the relationships that I built with so many different people, as well as just feeling good. And it's not even like feeling accomplished, not like

that, but just like feeling good. Yes, I think that's what I get.

Virginia, a presenter of transgender topics, discussed the meaningful and personal benefits she received from doing her work:

And so, there is a part of me that knows that there are probably some folks who maybe haven't identified as transgender yet and haven't really had the work or the experience to recognize that. But after seeing my presentation, they might feel safer, and they might feel like they can attach on that. That's meaningful for me, too. It certainly helped my presentation skills. I've learned so much about talking to groups and about how, about how doing presentations is about conveying information and things like that, learning what works and what doesn't. And I think it has made me more courageous in terms of talking in front of people.

Golda described the rewards of feeling personally invested and knowing her work contributes to positive changes:

To me, it's satisfying, because it's, I don't know how to say this, it's real, it's work that I believe in very strongly that has personally affected me and many other women in particular and people of color in the work that I do with people of color. Um, and it's like, true, like true! To me. Uh, and when you see change, when you know that just something you said, because you were in the room where decisions were made, and you questioned or you challenged, and as a result of that there was, like, positive change that are, that is impacting other people. That is extremely rewarding. So you know that if you weren't in that room, and you know, and you didn't put your voice out there, even though sometimes there are serious consequences to doing that, but knowing that that's what made a difference, and it has this, like, what's this, domino effect. That this one thing then led to the decision maker making, and sometimes you're the decision or you're part of the decision making. Led to implementation, of a particular change, which then results in other positives. So that, that's rewarding to me.

Valuing the relationships with colleagues and other social justice activists is another important part of activist work. Elizabeth illustrated her relationships to other activists:

But, selfishly, I really think the best part is that I have the best colleagues in the world, who also care about these things, these kinds of things that I care about, and do the same kind of work that I do. And these are colleagues that I wouldn't have and friends that I would not have if we did not share this work together and these passions...we were just involved in a lot of organizational change together. These are people that I go to conferences and meetings to see, you know. And

that's where I get my strength, and that's where I get my kind of encouragement to keep going. And I know that that's what we do for each other. And that's the absolute best part. I just feel like my life is enriched by really fabulous, fabulous people because of this work.

The personal investment of activism is meaningful and relational. Given that involvement in this work is valued and meaningful to women activists, it can also include an emotional investment.

### *Emotional Investment in Activism*

Emotional investment in activism includes internal reactions experienced by women activists throughout their involvement in activist work:

There's something that gets kind of triggered in me when someone is being treated unfairly. I get, I get, I have an emotional reaction to it." (Mollie)

I think that there are a lot of people who benefit from other people's suffering, and that's sad, and it's true. (Khela)

Pretty much, the activity that I participate in [as a birth doula] is alone, it's what I do. (Hope)

A lot of the girls -- I heard some pretty -- not interesting, but very sad stories there... it was very heartbreaking to hear that, especially because the conditions in that area are so kind of scary in a lot of ways, because it's a very low-funded district. (Sam)

Such an emotional investment in activist work can interfere with the purpose or intention of the work, according to Bear:

For me, the biggest challenge is knowing that I'm feeling outraged, taking that outrage, setting it right down next to me and saying, We'll get back to this; and then, responding from a different place, because, ultimately, what I want is to connect to someone, make them feel valued, so that, and then, they will be able to hear me. And I know from my work as a psychologist, if we don't do that, they don't hear you.

and Virginia:

I think in the past, what I have done is what I've done for a lot of my life, which is basically to shut off my emotions and just push myself into it. Like, in order to survive it, I have to just basically shut out the fear and shut out the things that get in the way and force myself to go through with it. And that could be effective in terms of, like, getting me to do the things. But, it really, it does a lot of damage to me. And, as I mentioned, it makes me more disconnected from the people I'm around. Seeing how I've responded in the past, um, as I've gone forward, I've gotten a better sense of, um, that approach will just end up with me being miserable, me being burnt out, me being ineffective.

Defining *activism* is complicated, given the multiple types of social justice work and the environments in which it occurs. To participants, social justice work involves a sense of inclusion to making the world a better place by equitable distribution of resources to all populations and ending systems of oppression and negative attitudes towards marginalized populations. Furthermore, activism is an ongoing process that incorporates a personal investment for activists. This personal investment is both fulfilling and requires an emotional investment. Bear and Virginia (above) illustrated how the emotional investment in activist work can complicate the process. This was just one of the many challenges associated with activist work. The following section illustrates challenges identified with doing social justice work.

### Challenges to Conducting Social Justice Work

Participants identified challenges to activist work at micro, meso, and macro levels. Challenges discussed at the micro level were related to responses to micro-aggressions and overcoming feelings of inadequacy. Challenges at the meso level were related to the women's community, work and educational environments, and families. Macro-level challenges were related to systemic institutions that uphold attitudes of discrimination, such as a cultural disdain towards women. These three levels of

challenges are each discussed in the following sections.

### *Micro Challenges in Activism*

Micro challenges describe those struggles that occur at the individual level. Frida, a woman of color, discussed her internal challenge of professionally addressing micro-aggressions.

As much as I love trying to facilitate dialogue and get people to open up about their experiences and opinions, I sometimes have a hard time with being really direct with people when I experience micro-aggressions, or if I, you know, just feel invalidated. Often with, like, collaborators or someone else I might be working with, uh, on a project or a social justice initiative, I sometimes have a hard time, um, asserting may not be the right word, but I'll use it for now. Like, asserting my experience and opinions as valuable in those places. When people disagree with me, I, I find conflict a little bit intimidating, which is something that I'm working on as a therapist and as a (giggles) social justice advocate.

Ada described her experiences with self-doubts and feelings of inadequacy when engaging in social justice work:

A lot of my challenges come from my own self-doubt. And I think my own kind of, I don't know if the word demon is right the word. But my own inner stuff, my own, you know, sense of, Am I good enough? Am I smart enough? Am I, will they listen to me? ...Because you know, I do get really anxious. I know I've had to do presentations about working with Dreamers and had to do presentations about immigration and things like that; and I get very anxious beforehand, anticipating the remarks. So the anxiety about anticipating the whole range of comments, I think, makes me very nervous and anxious.

Latalia discussed feeling discouraged from the amount of time and energy required by activist work:

I would say personal is more time consuming. You need to give up your personal time, and that can lead to feeling – not burnt, well kind of burnt out, but just like discouraged, losing the fight when you're fighting the fight...

Bear discussed how becoming emotionally overwhelmed in reaction to ignorance by another individual caused complications to responding in a professional manner:

So, it took me about 24 hours to kind of calm down enough emotionally, because I was so, I mean, there was just so much wrong with this request on so many levels and I thought, I'm not ready yet to try and respond. I just couldn't write an appropriate response.

Virginia describe her internal conflict of finding balance in her schedule while also believing that turning down invitations to present on transgender topics meant losing opportunities to communicate vital information to students or members of her community.

I definitely get the sense a lot of times that, if I don't do it, no one else will. Which puts me in a really difficult position, because I can either say yes to a lot of things that would wear me down and I'll feel really bad about, or I can say no and suspect that it probably won't happen or it probably won't get done. And so, that can make it really hard to say no if you're okay with it.

Micro-level challenges occur within the individual person, such as feeling guilt about the amount of time dedicated to social causes or wrestling with feelings of anger and frustration towards ignorant statement by others. Meso-level challenges in activist work appeared different from micro level challenges and are discussed in the next section.

### *Meso-level Challenges in Activism*

Meso-level challenges are those obstacles associated with one's career and educational environment, community, or family. Many challenges related to academic environments were identified. Believing that "academe is not socially just," Hope described her distress regarding her conflicting values with those of her graduate program.

Well, I'm just very value-driven. I would say that in my values, I mean -- how would I define them? I mean making sure that whatever context I'm in or whatever situation I'm in, it's not displacing anyone, it's not disrespecting anyone



and the best of my ability, is actually advancing someone else or giving someone else dignity or giving someone else pride. That's like the values that I live by, right? ... So if I lived by any other value set or I was forced to live by any other value set, that's what I mean, academia [and I] have not had the greatest ties, right? Because academe doesn't have my value set. And so, that's why it's been hard, it's been a struggle for me to get through my program. And so. But if I didn't take on that struggle, and if I just lived in the ivory tower and did the benchmarks the way they wanted me to do it, I would not have been able to feel okay.

Mollie also acknowledged the challenges of working in an environment and discipline that lack value of social justice.

I mean, the biggest challenge is undervalued. In fact, that would be it, is undervalued. And then there are, there are different ways in which that is manifest; it becomes more concrete challenges for, for me and for others doing it, in my opinion. So it being undervalued society, it being undervalued within our discipline. And I do, I mean, I feel like my colleagues would balk at this. But I feel like the activism, itself, is undervalued in counseling psychology. And, and, so, for example, we have, like, for our students, we have, like, um, an annual outstanding student researcher award. And I don't know if we recently have one that is an activist, or I don't think we do. But there's nothing that is really getting at faculty or students who are doing the on-the-ground work. It has to be something they published, it has to be something that they, you know, did research on. It's not, it's not, it's the critical stuff; and the activism, in my opinion, is not valued in the same way in our discipline. So whether it translates, that's one way it can translate. ... I don't necessarily think that some of those issues that are categorized as issues related to justice are getting the funding that they deserved in order to really illuminate them. And so, so, that looks like doing a lot of work for free, and / or underpaid. I think that undervaluing also compromises the effectiveness of, of what, everything that we do. So those are the challenges I think, the undervaluing and how that translates.

Many participants, such as Sam, discussed the challenges of balancing a demanding schedule with their activist work:

As a grad student, one of the biggest challenges is trying to manage my class work and my clinical work with, like, wanting and feeling like it's part of my identity to reach out to the community in different ways; and so, finding that time is probably the biggest challenge.

Ada discussed the challenges of being the "go-to" professor when supporting students of color.

I'm often the go-to person as an ally, as, for many different communities, whether they'd be Armenian, Persian, or Israeli, we have a lot of students. So, they just kind of know I'm the person who understands culture and diversity, so they'll all come to me, whether it's, they feel like they're being silenced. So it's kind of helping them solve their problems, but also realizing their structural components, so being sure that I can be that voice, too. That's been hard. I think the student relationship part has been hard, because, I mean, because sometimes I'm not getting the full story, and so it creates this tension, like, are they playing faculty against each other? And if, I've gotten caught in that once, and I haven't let it kind of dissuade me too much, but just be careful that I'm getting the full story.

Anais described her struggles to make administrators in higher education understand her cause to support parent students at her institution:

I think it's frustrating, because working within an academic institution, within higher education, you know, my thought process has been that, like, isn't the institution supposed to be supporting the students? Isn't that supposed to be the main goal? But, like, I don't think so, you know, like not really...I'm thinking to myself, like, this is a business, you know, this is a business...So I think that, like, at some point, we've lost sight of the work that needs to happen with the students, which is a big barrier, right? So then, when I'm trying to talk to an administrator about working with student parents, and people are like looking at me twisted because they can't even understand what I mean when I say student parent.

Maya illustrated the challenges related to power differences within academe and the messages she received from individuals in higher positions of power regarding her involvement in activism:

I think what's most salient for me now is the sexual assault case, and so, um, what's been challenging for me has been doing what I know or feel is the right thing to do, kind of in my gut, but then getting pushed back from different people about what my role is or what I should be doing, given my position or whatever. And this happened as a graduate student, too, actually, now that I think of it; and so, having, like, mentors or senior colleagues encouraging me to take a step back and not be so vocal or active for various reasons, which, yeah, so that's been a challenge, because I think because they're in positions of power, like over me, or, like, senior faculty members, or they're, when I was a grad student, they were my professors, that has called me to question whether I'm doing the right thing; but then, in my gut, it feels like it's the right thing. So it's kind of that challenge between -- what I feel like is ethically or morally right, and then what is -- I don't know, like, the right response as a professional or whatever. So, um, doo ta doo ta doo. Yeah, so that's been the biggest challenge right now, is just being able to know that I made the right choice, even if other people disagree with it and even

if there's, like, professional consequences.

Experiencing sexist remarks by male colleagues was discussed by Ada as a challenge to non-tenured faculty:

And so, I can think of, in particular, one professor who's the neuropsychologist on faculty, very well-known, you know, prolific writer and so on. But he's also a jokester. But, twice I've been the butt of his jokes. And it just feels really demeaning, being nontenured and so on. And it really had to do more with my intelligence, in the way he did it. So, I think that was really, really hard. And it's in the context of, you know in conversations where, you know for instance, I might have been, I was advocating for students in the program and, or trying to create scholarly communities, and so on, and then, this just happens.

Hope illustrated how people in her community make jokes at her expense as a White woman discussing White privilege or racism.

So, in the White community, when you start talking about this, you get eye rolls or they call you a bleeding heart or a liberal. Heaven forbid, I mean that's the nicest thing that I have ever been called. Even though I don't define myself politically, because I don't like the political system, um, but, you know, you get bleeding heart liberal, you get, oh my God! Jokes about, oh, the jokes, are just so horrible. About, you know? For me, it's in relation to the Black community. Any social justice advocate that attached to any community is going to get jokes about being associated with them. Like, do you know you're White? That's what I get. It's like, yes. I know I'm White. That's the point. That's what I know that you don't know, is that I'm White. Do you know what I'm saying? It is so hilarious, because exactly what you're trying to tell me is, is ironically what they don't understand. And so, it's safe to talk about your value system in those communities, where it's not safe to talk about it in the White community all the time. Emotionally safe, psychologically safe, of course.

Meso-level challenges were also identified with activist work conducted in community settings. Person J discussed her challenges conducting research and advocacy work with a vulnerable population, criminal offenders:

Getting access to the population is hard. I think that they're really protected, so it's hard to, you need to build trust and such.

Bad Ass Professor discussed the challenges related to working with public schools in her community.

Another barrier would be, you know, you're working with a lot of moving parts. So you are dealing with school districts, and each -- with each school -- one school district but a lot of different schools, each schools have their own principals and each school has their own rules. And so, it's just kind of managing all of that while being a part of a grant project that has its own requirements through the U.S. Department of Education. So, imagine that. So, I guess those could be -- that's what I mean by the red tape. Make things more difficult, but hasn't really prevented us from doing our job.

Golda described her challenges working with human trafficking survivors:

Challenges I encounter. Sexism, on the part of a lot of different people. Sexism on the part of people who are in charge of making decisions. I encounter internalized sexism on the part of women who are, you know, disempowered. That if they developed a consciousness around feminism, truly and organized and unified, then that could be so powerful.

Anna described challenges of not feeling supported by family members, people who are not directly related to her activist work but still a part of her community.

I would think that another challenge for me would be, I come from a really small community; and so, every time that I go home, I find that people are really surprised in what I'm doing and very surprised that I'm doing the work that I am. And a lot of people that I'm, that are from the community that I am from, don't agree with some of the things that I'm supporting. And then, that can be also kind of difficult, because, ya know, you want to go home and go to the grocery store and do the things that you want do from your home town; but I'm, ya know, people are very surprised, and it's almost... it almost takes me aback. That's one of the things that, even though I really love doing the work that, ya know, I'm not supported when I go home. I'm supported by some, but not by all.

Meso-level challenges occur within one's community, work, and educational environments. Macro-level challenges occur at the national or global level. This type of challenge is discussed in the following section.

### *Macro-level Challenges to Activism*

Challenges described at the macro level include institutions that uphold systems of oppression. Diana discussed the challenges of dispensing information to women

outside of academic environments.

I guess dispensing information. It's really challenging, to do that, in a country that, I think, in a space that would prefer that benefits from people staying uninformed. . . . I mean, the fat talk is a really good example of that. I think that literature is just powerful, and I'm so glad that people are doing it or pursuing that area of research, because I think we have a real sickness, honestly, in our society as women around the issues of size.

Person J illustrated how cultural biases towards a vulnerable population create challenges within activist work.

I think there are people who have an attitude, "Well, they deserve what they get. They committed crimes, so they should be penalized. Why should we give them a job?" And so, I work with criminals, and I work with people who aren't the top, they're kind of the most rejected of society, especially if they're incarcerated. So, I think I come across that barrier. People have, we all have biases; and I think it's harder to convince people that we need to help criminals. And then, I guess these, they might say, "Well, we need to help poor people." It might be more convincing than saying, "We need to help criminals." Even though many criminals are poor, too, so anyway. So that's an obstacle. It's people's biases.

The micro-, meso-, and macro-levels of challenges identified with activist work illustrate the complexities of conducting social justice work. Many identified challenges related to academic environments. The demands of balancing classwork, clinical / practicum requirements, and research demands with unpaid, volunteer-based activist work were challenging for many students. Some of the graduate student participants felt unsupported and disconnected from programs that did not support social justice work. Nontenured faculty members faced pressures to produce multiple research publications to gain tenure, in addition to teaching courses and serving as academic advisors to graduate students. Tenured and nontenured faculty members also discussed challenges of finding balance among the demands of being a psychologist, doing social justice work, and their personal lives.

Challenges related to academic work were more frequently discussed than

challenges connected to community activist work. This finding may be linked to the fact that all participants had conducted activism within academic environments, and only a few women were also involved in community activism. In addition, many challenges were ingrained within the roles of being a graduate student and faculty member, such as feeling undervalued by professors or colleagues. These challenges appeared more connected to one's identity as a counseling psychologist than challenges found in community work. However, that is not to minimize the distress and frustrations aligned with community activism. All of the obstacles connected to social justice presented problems.

Given the variety and severity of identified challenges, how did participants overcome such obstacles in order to continue their involvement in social justice work? This question is addressed in the following sections describing self-care. First, a description of five characteristics of self-care that emerged from the data is provided. Second, the importance of self-care for women activists is described by identifying benefits and consequences. Third, four themes that emerged from the data defining self-care for women activists are each discussed, followed by an explanation describing their relationships to one another. Lastly, the relationships among the four themes are conceptualized within a social justice context.

### Self-Care

Participants described self-care as being crucial to their wellbeing and mental health, yet challenging to incorporate into busy schedules. Some participants labeled themselves as being bad at self-care but having a desire for more of it. In a similar

manner to social justice work, the definition of self-care was not clear. Many participants remarked that self-care is vague, broad, and defined on a personal basis. Self-care was described as an important skill or strategy that is not intuitive (Hope), a way of thriving and surviving (Golda), *how* people care for themselves when tired and empty (Person J), and rooted in knowing (Frida, Latalia, Sam). This last concept of conceptualizing self-care as being *rooted in knowing* encompasses three overarching characteristics of self-care that emerged from the women's experiences. These three characteristics are: Self-Care is a Learning Process, Self-Care Looks Different, and Self-Care is Multidimensional. First, a brief explanation describing the concept of self-care as *rooted in knowing* is provided, and then followed by an explanation of the three characteristics encompassing the meaning of self-care.

### *Self-Care Rooted in Knowing*

The concept that self-care is rooted in knowing refers to having an awareness for one's emotional, physical, and spiritual needs during different situations and among different environmental settings. Sam commented on how self-care involved "figuring out" what type of self-care "fit" for her at different moments.

Or, like, my version of self-care is so different, like this is what I do for self-care; and then it's kind of like, you figure out what you need to do....So knowing that I can't do it all and picking and choosing, like, what's appropriate for me to do right now or what am I most interested in right now, and that was kind of, go with the flow of my life, what fits for that.

Frida described the relationship between self-rooted in knowing and how self-care oftentimes varies depending on her different needs:

I think it's, like, at different times I'll feel a different way that helps me know I need to do something different. So it varies.

Latalia defined self-care as a place of knowing as the fundamental root for understanding self-care.

I think that, specifically, for me, self care is, I think it's rooted in knowing, my increased knowing of what I need in certain moments or days; and I think that that's a maturity and emotional connection issue that just over time, especially if you didn't have parents who taught you a lot about emotions, with some majority of humans walking around don't have. So I think it's a rooted knowing and it's not always right, the gutter gauge is not always right, but it sort of like starting there, the starting point.

Latalia's description of self-care as a "starting point" connects to one of the five traits summarizing participants' understanding of self-care, Self-Care is a Process. The following section describes these five characteristics for how participants conceptualize self-care, beginning with Self-Care is a Learning Process.

### *Self-Care Is a Process*

Many participants discussed their journeys to discovering self-care throughout their lives. Frida described it as, "I'm still working on it, I'm figuring out how to do self-care as a graduate student." Ada described her self-care as changing: "For me, it's changed over time. So, I think now that I'm in my 40s, it's more about taking time for exercise, which is not as intense as it used to be. So now it's, just, gosh, can I just get a walk." Latalia also commented on how self-care changes throughout life:

I mean, it does change over time, right? Ability issues and whether temporary or permanent, I mean, we're all sort of in that trajectory toward people with different ability statuses, like, during your whole life... and it's a process with both, like setting boundaries with yourself, setting boundaries with others. Exactly. It's a big process.

Sam illustrated how childhood upbringing interfered with understanding self-care at a younger age.



Self-care just wasn't like "a thing" growing up for me. There was always, like, a lot of pressure to exceed expectations in athletics and school and music, so I kind of had that mentality growing up, kind of the person who is stressed the most wins.

Anais discussed the relationships between knowing herself and engaging in the process of understanding the best structure of self-care to fit her needs.

So, I know about myself that when I don't want to focus on something, I will throw myself into other things, whether it's, like, cleaning the entire house from top to bottom or, like, signing up to volunteer and everything I can do in the community forever; like, you know, it's easier to be busy than to just sit with yourself and think. And so, I think that one of the benefits of self-care and one of my growth areas really is learning to engage in the process, right? Like mindfulness could be a very, very beneficial part of self-care for me, but I choose...not to engage with mindfulness because it's hard.

Learning how to integrate self-care changes with the type of roles these women took on in their lives. Elizabeth discussed her process of learning self-care throughout her time as a professor.

When I was a professor, I was really, really good at helping my students with self-care. I preached about it a lot, and I constantly was talking to them about it and trying to help them manage self-care along with whatever their responsibilities were, the things that they had to get done. I think I was better at preaching it than practicing it, although it's been something that I've struggled with forever and ever and ever. And over time, maybe it's also just -- maybe aging is also at work here, so sometimes I can't tell if I've gotten older and wiser and more measured about things or I've just gotten older and more tired. I just don't know...

Learning about self-care over the individual lifespan illustrates the complexity of defining self-care. Virginia illustrated that definitions of self-care evolve as individuals become more aware of their needs. She said, "My definition of self-care has definitely evolved, the more that I've realized that I've needed it." Given that self-care is an ongoing process that depends on individual needs and changes over different circumstances, it is of no surprise that self-care appears different for individuals. The next characteristic describing self-care is Self-Care Looks Different.

### *Self-Care Looks Different*

Self-care is difficult to define, because it is a process that changes over time and requires a basic understanding of individual needs. Another reason self-care is challenging to define is because it shows up differently for people. Many participants discussed the practice of mindfulness as a form of self-care. However, Anais explained why mindfulness is not an effective means of self-care for her.

It's hard to sit with yourself and sit with being like, "I feel sad today" or "I feel really frustrated" or "I feel helpless," you know, in the work that I do and just in my personal life, sometimes.

Virginia discussed her views of not defining yoga as self-care:

I would consider it self-care if I went to yoga thinking, I enjoy this, and I'm doing this because I enjoy it and it will make me feel better. I think it's, that might be where I want to get, ideally. But most of the time now when I'm in yoga, I just feel like I'm doing it all wrong, and I don't entirely know what I'm doing. I'm more so doing it because I, I'm sedentary and I need the exercise and the flexibility. I don't do it because it makes me feel better. But if I get to that point, and I hope I will someday, that's then it will be self-care.

Diana illustrated why yoga is an example of self-care for her, given the importance she places on having immediate satisfaction from self-care.

To me, that's an important part of self-care, is actions and activities that have more immediate results than we often get to see in our social justice efforts, because, as we've talked about, they're sometimes- they're very drawn out, they're extended, and it can take, it can take a very long time, indeed we might never see...uh, the fruits of our efforts, or we might see only glimpses of it. So, to have something that's really concrete, tangible, a yoga class is like that for me, too. I can go and do a, you know, an hour and fifteen minutes of a yoga class and there's a qualitative shift in me from beginning to end, and it's important to have those things, I think, in our self-care.

Virginia illustrated how yoga is not a form of her self-care because of its challenges and lack of positive outcomes, but Diana included yoga as a self-care practice because she appreciates its immediate and rewarding outcomes. Anais explained that, to

her, self-care does not always have immediate positive outcomes but is still worth pursuing for long-term benefits.

For me, I found that I don't necessarily always feel better after self-care. But I think I'm learning that that is okay, that sometimes it's not about the end result, because I am very much an end result person. I think that's what I'm learning about the self-care activities that I engage in, that there are lots of days or there were lots of days when I would leave my therapy session. I'd be like, Oh man! That sucks, like, you know. And that's okay. Like, there are gunna be days when you still feel sucky, you know, and there are gunna be days when I leave church and there's still something on my mind or I feel convicted [sic] about, maybe, you know, behavior and action or something I said or did or just wanting to be a better person and better human being.

Another way of acknowledging that self-care appears different among individuals is to also recognize that individuals do not always agree with one another's modes of self-care. Latalia described her experiences with choosing not to judge modes of self-care that conflict with her understanding of self-care.

Okay, self-care. It means different things for different people, and we can't judge people if they want to work harder. If they want to stay at work because they want to write an article; for them, that might be self-care. But it's a fine line because that can also be burn-out and overextension and overcommitment and all the things that people, that a lot of successful people do sometimes or have to do in order to be successful.

Bear illustrated the importance of respecting differences in practice and beliefs surrounding self-care:

That self-care comes in many different ways and to respect other people's self-care as much as you respect your own. It's going to look different for every person and to be able to learn from other people's self-care and to share your own and, yeah. You still need to take care of yourself.

Having a flexible definition of self-care provides more openness to and acceptance of the different ways in which people choose to engage in self-care practice. As Latalia noted, working hard to complete tasks may be considered self-care if it does not lead to burnout. Respecting each individual's process of learning to care for her- or

himself includes respecting the decisions of how to best meet one's unique needs. A third characteristic of self-care is that it is multidimensional.

### *Self-Care Is Multidimensional*

Conceptualizing self-care as a multidimensional concept refers to the different areas in which self-care appears throughout the lives of women activists. Bad Ass Professor described self-care from a multidimensional framework as "taking care of your individual needs...whether it's psychological, physical, emotional, recognizing that you have needs and finding ways to make sure you address them." Maya suggested that self-care is "how you, like, rejuvenate or replenish yourself, either mentally, physically, or spiritually." Diana described self-care related to relationships, or relational self-care, as being important. She also described self-care from a multidimensional perspective by identifying dimensions of self-care:

So, there's maybe a temporal, like a short-term, long-term, as well as the internal, external, like, I would imagine there's several different dimensions.

Conceptualizing self-care as being multidimensional summarizes how women care for different parts of themselves. These parts involve care for one's physical body, social relationships with self and others, spiritual needs, and a personal awareness or mindfulness. In addition, self-care activities fell within categories of internal modalities or external modalities. Table 2 illustrates the different categories of self-care described by women activists, Physical, Relational, Spiritual, and Mindful. The self-care activities are described as either being internal or external modalities of self-care within each category. Internal modalities of self-care include attitudes of gratitude (Hope), personal growth to make healthy decisions such as leaving a toxic job (Elizabeth), decreasing worried

thoughts (Ada), and mindfulness (Anna). External modalities of self-care include drumming (Latalia), eating healthily (Sam), exercising (Maya), traveling (Bad Ass Professor), building connections (Anais), dancing (Golda), roller derby (Hope), cooking (Diana), sleeping (Frida), yoga (Sam), and knitting (Bear). Self-care activities within their respective categories are discussed in greater detail in the following sections outlining the four themes of self-care. The four themes of self-care for women activists in counseling psychology are Relational Support, Influences, Challenges, and Strategies. Each theme is described in the following sections.

### Theme 1: Relational Support

One theme that emerged from the data involved women activists in counseling psychology engaging in self-care through relational support. Five sources of relational support included 1) academic environments, 2) family, 3) group support, 4) nature, and 5) relationship to self. Each source is described in the following section.

#### *Academic Environment*

Relational support found within academic environments includes program support and mentorship from university departments. Program support included being in a program that values social justice work, feeling supported by colleagues and faculty members, and working in an environment supporting self-care. Bad Ass Professor described her experience of feeling supported by work colleagues:

I've gotten lots of support from my college and university, so I don't see any barriers for me doing what I do. And they love that I do what I do. They want more of it, so I do more of it.

Khela described her experiences of feeling supported by faculty members during a personal struggle:

I do feel – like, I think that, a lot of times, people say that their programs are barriers to them taking self-care. I have to say the opposite. I felt that my – like whenever I had something personally come up that is, whatever, triggering, huge family issue, something that I'm more invested in than the current work I'm doing, like, whatever. My, like, professors have been so understanding of it. ...My therapist is one of my professor's best friends; and, like, she helped set up that relationship, because she just thought it would be a good fit and whatever. I think that, I think that, like, they're just so supportive in that way. They're really great. They, like, I feel that I've been able to be really open and up front with them about what I struggle with, and I have cried in front of them so many times. All the faculty members have seen me have a total meltdown when I first came to grad school and I was, What am I doing here? I want to be back in the field. This place sucks. Like, what are you guys doing? You're what? I hate this. And, like, you know, they all helped me work through it; and, like, it was fucking hard; and I thought I might have dropped out of the program a couple of times and all of that, but, like, they did everything in their power to make me feel like I could get through it.

Person J illustrated how her work environment has a culture of accepting self-care:

I feel like I work in a place where people typically go on vacation and such. So I was very fortunate ... getting to work in an environment with people saying things like breaks are important, and they go on vacation.

Being connected to a university as a student or employee also provided opportunities for support from people in various campus departments. Anna and Virginia identified sources of support from staff members at their university counseling centers. Virginia described her mentor as

.... one of the women in the counseling center; she's the head of our diversity committee at the counseling center, and she has thrown herself into trying to change the culture of at least the counseling center...And it is really hard. It's really discouraging for her. But, particularly because she's such a well-adjusted emotionally healthy person, she's been persistent; and she's been a good source of support for other people. And so, she's continually a source of inspiration and continually a source of wanting to be like her when I grow up.

Anais illustrated the importance of having mentors who understand her lived experiences as a woman of color:

It's really nice to be able to lean on them for support, especially, like, older women of color within academia. It's helpful to know that they were once where I was; they once felt how I felt; and they can say things to me like, Yeah, it's hell and it sucks. And, like, I know, and sometimes, it's just validating; like, it's nice. People will be, like, And it's going to get better, and everything looks great. And like, yeah, like sometimes it's nice; at the same time, sometimes, it's nicer if somebody would be like, "Yeah, it feels pretty shitty, doesn't it?" That is really validating.

Receiving support from academic settings is one source of support underlining the theme *relational support*. A second source of support came through family relationships.

### *Family Support*

Many participants described their relationships with family members as sources of support. Frida discussed her relationship to her cousin, who also values social justice work:

I have one cousin, her name is Alicia, and she is someone I look up to a lot. She's, like, 20 years older than me; and I think she is maybe the first woman in my family who really, like, puts social justice forth as, like, a really important principle to her. Um, and she's also had a pretty tough life. She's a medical doctor, so she went through med school instead of a doc program, but you know something? That's kind of similar. Yes, so, often, conversations with her help.

Elizabeth described how members of her family help her maintain focus on what she values in life:

I think that the single biggest thing that helps is that my partner, my family, my children, and my grandchildren, I mean, those are the things that sort of give you perspective and keep you from, you know, going off the deep end when you've really had it. Well, it just sort of reminds you that there are things more important in the world than whether this jerk that you've just had a conflict with, it is worth your worrying about, obsessing about. And, you know, if you have to make a birthday cake for your grandson, that's way more important.

Golda described how her relationship to her daughter is a source of support:

My daughter, she is a source of, a lot of joy in my life, and yeah, having my relationship with my daughter and trying to mentor her through her 6th grade girl issues. You know? So, you know, and then just mentoring her on ways to be strong and how to, you know, how to deal with all life's challenges. And so, you know. And she's also a different personality, in some respects, from me. She's much better at saying, "That happened in the past, that was, like, yesterday. Like, let it go." I find her very strong. I learn a lot from her, from her reactions to things I find incredible.

Bear described how her relationship to her mother significantly contributed to the ways that Bear learned to stand up for her and other individuals:

My mother taught me about my own safety and the integrity of my own body and all of that; and I said, you know, I thought everybody's mom taught them that when I was growing up, because that seemed normal to me.... That was like, you know, when I was about 10 and my mother was, like, talking to us about not letting other people touch us and what to do if somebody did and all of that stuff, and like, you know, like in the early '60s people weren't talking about that, but she was.. Most kids didn't know anything about it, so I found myself standing up for other kids, you know, and they were like, "Wow! Thanks." But you know, it's, like, the stuff that I had learned at home. And if I came home and needed my mother's support, I had it. So it was, and I just didn't realized how extraordinary it was until I got old.

Relationships to family members were identified as a second source of self-care underlining the theme Relational Support. A third source of self-care that underscores this theme is group support.

### *Group Support*

Group support involves connections to groups of people and community-based or professionally based organizations. Anais described the ways in which she is supported by a group of friends who identify as the "circle of we."

Me and my best friend like to call, "Our circle of we," just people who kind of keep us grounded. I, most of my circle of we, are women of color; and it's nice to know that they are all strong and powerful and amazing women and at the same



time, and they believe the same thing about me; and at the same time, I don't have to be strong and powerful with them if I don't feel like it that day. That they allow me the space to be vulnerable and to be sad and to cry, if I need to, or to just go off for 30 minutes if I need to do something. That is really, really helpful to know that you have people that support you in however you are experiencing your life, you know, at the moment. Um, so that is definitely something that works.

Forming connections to groups of people was also found to occur online. Virginia indicated that she has a group of online friends by whom she feels supported. She also described the benefits of connecting to resources with the Internet.

Having the Internet is having access to so many different people and so many sources of information and validation and things like that.... I would read in comments about posts about different things, or I would get exposed to different websites for transgender people; that would be helpful. There's a lot that I have learned in support of resources when I was transitioning, which I think both helped my social justice work and with these trans women which were helpful and with social justice advocacy in general. Yeah, I think that was the most significant ones.

Bad Ass Professor illustrated how the Internet is a great source of self-care for emotional release:

You know, my Facebook friends have always been there, because I do vent. So when I vent, they are there supporting me, saying, "Oh sorry, having a bad day. Hope things will get better." You know things like that. Especially around IRB. Lately it's been IRB [Institutional Review Board]. IRB sucks. IRB, you know, that kind thing.

Ada described supportive groups of people from her connections to academic environments and to professional affiliations:

On the campus, CESA. I think the Women's Resource Center, for sure, but in national organizations, the NLPA, the National Latino Psychological Association. It's like la familia. It's really been my professional home. Yeah, nothing compares.

Groups of women were found to be a large source of support. Mollie identified role models of self-care and activism through women in national organizations and at her work setting:

Many of the foremothers in AWP were definitely great role models. And similarly, I would say that I work here at [location], I work in a women's university, and the majority of the faculty are women. And they are, have been amazing role models, most of them, not all of them, obviously; but most of them have been amazing role models with regard to, you know, modeling leadership, a leadership, leadership values that I value, and being collaborative and egalitarian, um, and holding power and knowing how to hold and use power. And not being afraid to do that.

Additional professional organizations that were identified as sources of support include women in Division 35 Society for the Psychology of Women; Division 17 Society for Advancement of Women; the Association for Women in Psychology; Division 17 Society for Counseling Psychology, and the Association for Counseling Center Training Agencies. As illustrated by Mollie, groups of women were identified as sources of support. These two sources of relational support provided acceptance, a lack of judgment, validation, and a shared set of values with "like-minded people." Another source of relational support was a connection to nature.

### *Relationship to Nature*

Associating one's self with nature was described as having a relationship to animals and connection to earth. Bear identified her pet dogs as a form of self-care. Hope identified her cats as a form of self-care. "I love my cats. They are just, they don't yell at me, and they don't talk to me. They aren't racist. I just love them." Diana described how animals are often appreciated by social justice activists. "I think animals are really important in self-care for social justice advocate activists:

I've known, that's, something I've seen a lot of, is people who are in our field, specifically as counseling psychology who are also really strong animal lovers. So I think just engaging with, ya know, nonhuman creatures, there's something very, um, renewing about that.

Maya described how owning a puppy contributes to other forms of self-care, like exercising and laughing:

So I got a dog in February; and she's great, because she's very entertaining. She makes me laugh and smile, then she forces me to get outside and be playful and walk, and that kind of stuff. So it kind of forces exercise and that kind of thing.

In addition to seeing animals as self-care, participants described their positive experiences with outdoor nature. Frida described how walking in the woods leads to a peaceful feeling:

I would try to take a walk out, like, in the woods almost every day. So that in and of itself is great self-care for me and really cleared my head. But then, while I was walking, I'd often like go into the stream or something and pick out a few, like, colorful stones that meant something to me, or like an interesting piece of wood or something. And then I would, like, go home; and I have a front porch in my house in Philadelphia; and, um, I'd, like, sit on the front porch so I can still, like, listen to the trees blowing and everything. And, made these sculptures, my kind of, like, making a collage out of all the different stones and stuff I found. Um, and that is, that was also really calming. So both of those two acts gave me a lot of peace; and, like, particularly, being in nature, you know, made me feel connected to other people again. Um, so then, by giving those art pieces to the people that I care about, I felt like I was able to, like, extend that feeling of peace to others that I, you know, other people in my life.

Latalia described her reactions to being near palm trees that she planted at her home. She said,

Being with my palm trees that I planted here ... and playing with my cats. The palm tree is a big one, because I'm from Miami, and I'm here in North Texas where it gets to be three or 103 and it could be just snow and ice and all that. So that is very meaningful to me, and just being in nature; and it's a very spiritual and connecting to the earth, to the source, and it feels good.

Maya described her connections to an energy healer that brought her closer to her relationship to nature.

There's this woman that I've been going to, Grace Sesma, she's a native healer, and I've really just -- to me it's opened up a place of understanding energy more, which I've never really explored, and seen how I manage that and don't get energized. So I think I'm definitely a newbie in that area. But it definitely is a

place where I feel renewed. Yeah, and she's very social justice-oriented. So, I've liked learning about her ideas and works. So, being more in tune with the moon cycles and energy around that and creativity has been something that I'm in touch with more with nature and grounding, you know, things like that. And it's funny, my body called me to them before my mind. I noticed it last summer, I think. I constantly wanted to go lay on the ground outside. And I was, like, "Oh, I just miss laying on the grass." And so, I found myself with my kids just laying on the grass, looking at the sky, talking. And lay under a tree. And we do it almost every week, and it felt so good.

Connections to earth and animals appeared to have a grounding effect on these women. They discussed having spiritual, meaningful connections, stronger connections to others, and experiencing a peaceful calmness. The final source underlining relational support is relationship to self.

### *Relationship to Self*

The ways in which participants connected to themselves is the last source of self-care that contributes to the theme of relational support. Elizabeth discussed her need for a lot of "soul searching" to decide upon leaving a "poisonous job." Golda described self-care as being "centered with one's self and then connected to the larger universe, to other people, and to nature, and that you're part of nature. You get that with running, you get that with hiking, with dancing, all of those sorts of, um, 'cause its moving mediation."

Anna explained how self-care maintains a level of humanity:

Ya know, making sure that, acknowledging that I'm still a person in all this and I'm not just a student and an advocate and a counselor. I am a person. Which I think is something that we oftentimes forget.... I think it looks different every time. I think some of the things that I do are, you know, stepping away from school for a couple minutes or going and getting a coffee or, you know, calling, calling my family and acknowledging my relationships with them. I think all of those things really put me back into, you know, I don't just have responsibilities to school. I have responsibilities to myself and responsibilities to others and things of that nature.

Virginia described self-care in relation to inner beliefs about herself:

Because caring for myself is saying that I matter and that what I have to contribute matters, and that I have to, and that I am okay. And that if I didn't do that for myself, how can I ever expect for anyone else to be able to do it for themselves?

Ada explained self-care in connection to herself as being clear about her needs:

Sort of trusting myself more, ...I'm doing what I think is the right thing or sticking up for myself, for what I believe in or what have you, and not feeling bad about that. I, yes, if I have that ability to have a place where I can turn it off or not, or not feel constantly available or whatever, then I'm able to do that. Be clear about my needs.

Bear discussed feeling grounded within an inner place of compassion:

I also believe that we are most powerful when we're in our compassion, which doesn't mean we're not fierce, it doesn't mean we're not angry, it just means all of that is included in our compassion. And that is when I think I, I am most powerful. And that is my most grounded place and that's what all my self-care leads me to.

She also talked about the powerful impact of being transparent during difficult moments in advocacy work. This skill requires an awareness of one's internal process during the present moment:

Transparency always looks a lot like, "Here's what I'm experiencing right now," and sort of doing it without any heat and no accusation; just putting it out there is a very powerful thing.

Ada also highlighted the need to know one's self in order to prioritize work or activist events:

I think sometimes it's an internal struggle of what do I really want to delve into right now? Where is my energy level? And am I just copping out? Am I getting lazy? So it's a constant checking in.

Hope discussed how a connection to her body is self-care:

I've just realized, probably in the past two years, how great it feels to know that you could probably beat someone up if you had to. And I know that that doesn't sound like, too peaceful and respectful. But at the same time, it's incredibly

empowering to get your body to the point where it's strong enough to exert physical force in a meaningful way. To protect myself. But also, it's just a metaphor for just strength in other areas, too. So a "strong body-strong mind" type of thing. But ...feeling that my body is strong. Yeah, it does something for my, it's great coping for me for some reason. And I just figured it out, like, in the past two years, I swear.

Anais illustrated how paying attention to the needs of the physical body is important to advocacy work.

And, yes, you can be a part of movements, and you can be a resource and an advocate and at the same time; what does it mean that you're not being a resource to yourself, that you're not being an advocate for yourself? And so I really, like, I struggled with that. But I think that that's really important; and I, I think that I'm starting to recognize as I do get older and more tired, because your body does that, that I need to really start paying, paying attention to that more. And that, that will make me better at doing the advocacy work if I can continue to kind of refuel me, you know.

The relationship to our selves is vital in understanding personal needs and maintaining self-respect. Virginia illustrated the importance of knowing how to engage in self-care for ourselves. She said, "If we don't take care of ourselves, no one else can take care of ourselves better than we can. No one else can empower ourselves better than we can. No one else can do the work better than we can for ourselves."

The first theme of self-care for women activists was Relational Support. The five sources that underlie the theme of relationship support were support within academic environments, families, group support, relationships to nature, and relationship to self. A visual diagram of Theme One is provided in Figure 1, which is then followed by the second theme of self-care for women activists in counseling psychology, Influences.

## Theme 2: Influences

The second theme to emerge from the data describing the role of self-care for women activists in counseling psychology is Influences. This theme incorporates four types of influences on self-care: Cultural and Identity Influences, Inspiration from Others, Male Support, and Social Justice Identity. The first influence that impacted the role of self-care for women activists is Cultural and Identity Influences.

### *Cultural and Identity Influences*

Cultural and identity influences describe how gender, race, religion, spirituality, and other pertinent forms of identity impact self-care. Bear described her view of cultural norms impacting self-care for women:

And oftentimes, and I think this is particularly hard for women, is that the self-care comes last. So, putting that self-care first can be a struggle, and, I work on it every day... I think self-compassion is something that we all struggle to have. Yes, especially as woman. I totally get that; and I think that's, again, lessons of gender.

Bad Ass Professor described her thoughts around the cultural messages for women to “hate themselves”:

There's lots of other ways we are taught to be mean to ourselves...or be hard on ourselves, or that somehow is, um, I don't know if that's, um, specific to women. It might be. Um, ya know, I guess another, another way that that manifests for women who, um, who are mothers is in the idea of, ya know, you can never be a good enough mother. Ya know, there's always, there's so much relentless pressure on women to be perfect mothers, to be selfless mothers, to give up everything for their children, and never have needs of their own or to subjugate any needs of their own, that kind of thing. And, again, that's really commonplace and, ya know, we have, in our culture, we have a lot of disdain for women who either don't have children, don't want to have children, or have children and, ya know, have other needs besides, besides giving care to their children. Yeah, it probably is a really gendered idea.

In addition to gender influences, participants described the influences of race on

self-care. As a woman of color, Anais discussed the importance of serving the Black community:

In general, I tend to work with the Black community. I tend to, I do. That doesn't mean that I don't work with other communities, but as a member of the Black community, it's very important for me to be within my community and serving, serving people who are close to me." ANAIS

Frida discussed the cultural messages she received about the Black community during her childhood upbringing and how such messages influenced her path to become a psychologist:

Identifying as Black meant that my family members couldn't acknowledge having a mental illness, because it would be seen as some kind of weakness, and we didn't have the space to be weak. You know there was, with another marginalized identity, you have to always put your best foot forward. And that, that got translated into not, um, seeking help, and not utilizing, um, therapy or any other kind of resources. So I really wanted to be able to kind of break down some of that stigma. I wanted to be a psychologist, because I feel like even just my identity alone is useful in that there aren't necessarily that many psychologists of color.

In addition to race and gender influencing beliefs and roles of self-care, religion and spirituality also impacted self-care. Anais, who self-identified as Christian, described her church as being her main source of self-care:

Church is a safe space for me. Church is one of the only places in my life where I think, at least at this point in my life, where I think that I can be completely vulnerable. It is something that I value for the community; and, at the same time, it's something that I experience very much by myself. But that's a choice; like, it's not that I will not talk to the person sitting next to me, because I will; and, at the same time, I recognize that it's for me. It is truly self-care for me. I am engaging in praise and worship for me. I am engaging, you know, in and with the pastors and what they're saying for me, and it's a very cleansing experience. There are times when I go to church, and I didn't even know I was heavy from the week until I get there, and I literally feel heavy. But by the time I'm leaving there, it's like I'm lighter, like I literally have, like, laid it down and given it to God. I'm like, All right, I'm ready to tackle the next week.

Person J discussed her views of seeing religion tied to self-care:



I think also it has a kind of a religious theme to it in some sense. So, I think, for me, going to a place of worship helps me, too, in self-care. Praying or just focusing on things that are of religious nature. It also is a self care. It's a self-care thing I might do. I think whatever problems we have in life or whatever problems we're trying to solve, I think, alone, I don't know. I mean, people have different things – alone, I couldn't solve it. I mean, I think in life we can't solve everything on our own. So kind of seeing a higher being or a deity that's more powerful than us -- I don't know, it makes, and how you view that deity, you know. If you view the deity as a just God, then, then justice will be served even after, it depends how you see it. Everyone has their view of God or universe or whatever, but I think that can also be one way, if things get overwhelming, as kind of, it's consider, you know our time on earth is finite. It's very unlikely that anyone will solve any of those social ills in their lifetime. And so, you kind of have to trust maybe that's how the world works or the universe works, or should you believe in a deity? However way you see that, that things will go on beyond you.

Ada identified as Catholic but also discussed honoring indigenous healing methods as self-care:

There's definitely for me the spiritual part, whether, you know, being present, we're Catholic and go to church, but also exploring more of my indigenous side, going to healers, getting limpias. A limpia, which is like a soul cleansing, spiritual cleansing....this woman that I've been going to, she's a native healer and ...to me, it's opened up a place of understanding energy more, which I've never really explored.

Sam described her connections to a community-based organization called H.O.P.E., Holistic Options for People Everywhere, which is a “nondenominational, nonreligious kind of spiritual group...a community of like-minded different people.” Sam indicated that her connection to H.O.P.E. was one source of self-care:

I think that's the biggest one, is H.O.P.E., as a source of self-care, because there have been times where I have been, things, school got in the way, and I was too tired to go and stuff, but I know that I can always go back to the community and they will welcome me with open arms. Everyone is so, I don't know, just so open and wonderful and very supportive of self-care as well.

Golda described how the act of breathing as form of self-care connects to spiritual self-care:

The breathing, which I guess is physical, but it's also very spiritual. I think the

piece about trying to focus on the bigger things, trying to release things that are really not important in the larger scheme of things. I think that's, like, spiritual. It gets into a higher plane of existence consciousness and being, instead of getting wrapped up in nonsense. You know. And just knowing, ... So I'm 48, so you start getting into, um, another thought-process, like closer to death, ... and the realization of, like, you know, that we're all going to die, and yeah, coming to terms with that. Like, how do you want to live your life? How do want to live, like, your remaining days? Do you want to get caught up in a lot of nonsense, you know? Coming to terms with all those questions. Those are really, um, those are spiritual questions.

Another related identity characteristic that influences self-care is aging, which involves gaining perspective throughout life experiences. Elizabeth described the manner in which she perceives aging to influence self-care.

I actually think, um, aging changes you, and starting to. If you have had a serious illness or somebody you know has had a very serious illness or you have lost friends to serious illnesses, I think it changes you. I think it makes you less willing to devote your time and energy to things that are -- that don't make you feel good. And allows you some distance from some of those battles. You know, you know the battle is still going to be there tomorrow or the next day, because by now you know the world is not going to change as fast as you would like it to. If you didn't win this battle today, you'll just go at it again another time. But it's not worth literally killing yourself over or making yourself ill over some failure in an arena in which, you know, ultimate success is decades, not hours, but decades and decades of work.

The identity of being a counseling psychologist or counseling psychology graduate student also impacted the role of self-care for these women. Diana discussed the ways in which she tries to incorporate self-care for her students into the classroom:

I think in some ways I do model some self-care things positively. Ya know, one of the things I do in my teaching, in addition to feeding my students, in the literal sense, I also, usually once a semester in my practicum course, bring in someone to do a yoga demonstration and a very gentle practice, and so I try to share the self-care that I do that way.

In addition to supporting her students by bringing self-care into the classroom, Diana also described how self-care relates to her work as a professor:

I think that, um, that self-care is really vital, um, in my work as a professor,

specifically, because I think it helps me, you know, hone my instrument, which is myself, so that I can be fully, as fully present as possible with my students.

Cultural and identity characteristics influence the role of self-care in the lives of counseling psychology women activists. Another form of self-care was seen in these women's sources of inspiration.

### *Sources of Inspiration*

Sources of inspiration were described through inspiring leaders, artists, and literature. Examples include works by bell hooks (Golda), Beverly Tatum (Maya), Paulo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (Frida), Martin Luther King quotes (Frida), Kristen Neff's writings on self-compassion (Diana), Tich Nhat Hanh on Mindfulness (Hope), Audre Lorde (Golda), and the Amish community who modeled the meaning of *Don't Meet Hurt with Hate* after experiencing a tragedy (Khela). Diana described how women feminist leaders with Jewish backgrounds were sources of inspiration:

I think that the other piece ... that is also really important that figures really prominently into my identity as a social justice advocate, and that is also being identified as strongly as feminist. ...So, women like Bella Abzug and Gloria Steinem and Betty Friedan, some of the most influential feminist thinkers were also Jewish.

Frida described her inspirational reactions from artwork by Frida Kahlo.

I, like, absolutely love Frida Kahlo, which you'll see. I think, like, looking at her paintings or something like that, especially Frida Kahlo, when I'm facing difficulties, because so much of her life was about overcoming difficulties. Like, she had all these health problems, and cheating husband, and blah blah; and she still, she used her tool to like, move through all that. Being, like, her artwork. So, yea, I just kind of remind myself to do the same thing, that there's, like, even more value in surviving out the other side if you face some of those difficulties.

These resources offered women inspiration and feelings of empowerment as social justice activists by providing a feeling of encouragement to continue activist work

when encountering challenges. Conducting social justice work requires support and resources. Many women also discussed the positive influence of receiving support from male friends, family members, or colleagues. The next source of influences on self-care was Male Support.

### *Male Support*

Men were identified as being role models for self-care or important sources of support. Bad Ass Professor described the ways in which her father modeled self-care during her childhood upbringing:

Like, my dad would come home, I mean, he'd probably rest for a little while, and then it was time to be with family and play games or watch movies on the television or whatever. So that was normal. Weekend, the same thing, you know, going out, having fun, or running errands. You know, just things like that. So, it wasn't more work, you know. So, I was like, "Oh, okay." So those are the kinds of role models that I had.

Virginia illustrated how having the support of a male friend who understood her struggles was an important source of self-care:

There was a gentleman who was about my same age who lives in New York City who I talked to a couple of times and read a lot of his stuff. It's just been really nice to actually talk to someone who is basically my same age and who does a lot of similar work.

Golda discussed how her male friend from graduate school enhanced her social consciousness:

It's also one of my best friends from graduate school, who was way more progressive than me earlier on, who's a man, where I developed a lot of consciousness around this thing, these things, these issues, as a result of my relationship with him.

Bear described the trust and reassurance she experiences when facilitating social-justice related presentations with a male co-facilitator:

There's also a white men's group; and there's an overlap between the dialogue, the men in the dialogue training group, and that group. So, those men, also, I would always trust to have my back; and I've been with one of them, no, twice, I've been with one of them where no matter what we did, it [social justice issue] just wasn't going to fly; and we finally looked at each other and go, "You know what? This isn't gunna to fly," and we just said it, we just put it right out there and we said it.

Women in heterosexual relationships also talked about the support they received from their husbands when feeling overwhelmed by work or roles as activist women. The importance of recognizing male support for women activists illustrates that men are part of the solution to creating social change. The last component to the theme Influences is Social Justice Identity.

### *Social Justice Identity*

Identifying as an activist influenced the role of self-care for the women. Person J illustrated how investing in and caring for other people can result in poor self-care.

I think people who care for other people and, you know, want to make a difference can easily burn out if they don't watch out.

Diana illustrated how her activist work relates to overall positive feelings towards herself:

I think social justice is part of self-care. You know, we talk about taking care of ourselves while engaging in social justice; but I think, you know, that's another need that, ya know, that I have. ...I think most people want to feel like they make a difference. Want to feel like they have an impact, so ...I would say I get, ya know, a lot of benefit to myself, ya know, to the parts of myself that, um, are really concerned about, about trying to live a good life and, like I talked about earlier when we were talking about my identity, being raised Jewish, of, um, trying to repair the world.

Khela described a similar belief that activist work is also a form of self-care when she said, "I think that self-care can be the activism, like when you feel like you're doing

this stuff that energizes you, that's a huge form of self-care."

Anna also described positive reactions to activist work as a form of self-care:

I always feel good about myself and feel good about what I'm doing after I leave from doing a program or doing some kind of advocacy work, whether it be individual or in a group.

Hope illustrated how teaching self-care is a form of activism that she also finds fulfilling:

And part of my social justice work involves teaching self-care to others, because self-care can help in the fight against discrimination personally, against feeling bad about yourself. And so, with any group of people that I work with, I tell them about self-care, right? So, it's kind of this process-based activism where you're like, This is what I do. You should do self-care, too, because you deserve it and it will help you.

Sam described how self-care is necessary to engage in activist work but also contains spiritual fulfillment:

We need to be healthy, mind, body, and spirit, in order to, kind of, do the work that we are supposed to do, you know? The work that we are supposed to do on a more spiritual sense, you know, like doing your life work, in a sense. By doing self-care and taking care of yourself, you are able to do that work to which you feel called to do.

Virginia illustrated how activism is a form of personal empowerment.

I could see activism being a whole bunch about self-care. And it often is, for me. It's a fight for my own empowerment, in some ways.

Ada illustrated how different types of activist work carry different levels of emotional investment, which informs her need for different forms of self-care.

To do work around gender, it's easy stuff for me. But when you also have that Latina and Latino piece to it, it becomes heavy and intense. And I don't know if that's because it has more personal relevance, but probably could happen. When I'm doing work around the LGBT community, okay, great. You know, that's easier for me. I think when it hits deeper and personally is where that's really hard for me. So, I just have to really stay in tune to how I'm feeling. So it's not something I really thought of, yet, but I guess I need to be aware of how I'm taking care of myself more around that type of work than the other.

Engaging in activist work by choice highlights the need for self-care. In addition, conducting social justice work was considered one form of self-care, given the positive rewards that come with doing this type of work. Self-care practices are especially important when addressing challenges and barriers within activism. Figure 2 provides a visual representation of Theme 2. Despite understanding the importance of self-care in advocacy work, women activists identified many challenges that interfered with a desire to practice self-care. The third theme to emerge from the data identifying the role of self-care for women activists is Challenges to Practicing Self-care.

### Theme 3: Challenges to Practicing Self-care

The obstacles that interfere with efforts to engage in self-care are presented in the third theme to understanding the role of self-care for women activists in counseling psychology. These challenges are categorized into four groups: Balance, Lack of Support, Cognitive Challenges, and Privilege. The categories are individually discussed in the following sections.

#### *Balance*

Many participants described their struggle to find time to schedule self-care practices, given the demands of their schedules. They described feelings of being off-balance. Khela discussed how investment in one activity causes her to feel off-balance with other areas of her self-care.

I'm really invested in doing something, like, I think that that is the important thing to do, and I, like, ignore the rest of what is going on. To me, that's the cause, that's what I've got to do. Ignore, like, ignore health, and ignore friends and family or school or whatever, like, that is what I have to do. I think that that's sort

of a personal challenge, right, when you're trying to figure out, like balancing the importance of different things.

Anais described how dedicating herself to serving others has interfered with seeking out dating partners:

I remember distinctly saying to my therapist over the past year, “You know, I want a partner; but I think I’d be a bad partner to somebody right now, because I don’t have the time or the energy, like physical energy or emotional energy, to dedicate to them. Because all of that, you know, was given to my clients and to my families at the Women’s Center and to my students; and it’s just one of those things where it was, like, I have to find a balance with that, though. Because I think it is so easy to get consumed by the work that I do, because I’m so passionate about it; and, at the same time, I’m a human being and I like going on dates.

Ada described the challenge to balance her own needs with the needs of family members:

The other is balancing my needs with the needs of others, is a big one. So, like, last night, I worked all day, and then the kids went to sleep. And it was kind of, you know, husband and wife time, but I really wanted to go to the gym. You know what I mean? But we couldn’t go together, so I didn’t want to leave him again. So it’s those kinds of dilemmas that are, just, how to balance everyone’s needs and my needs too.

Finding balance among full schedules is one of the challenges that interfere with women activists’ participation in self-care. Another challenge that influenced how women engaged in self-care involved challenges related to a lack of support.

### *Challenges Related to Lack of Support*

Although many participants found support through connecting with other individuals or group organizations, this was not an experience shared by all women. Virginia illustrated how women’s organizations and lesbian organizations do not always present as welcoming transgender women.



AWP, for instance. I mentioned that. Even just, like, LGBT places locally, um, and nationally, even at APA when I was there, they're supposed to be for people like me, but the idea that a transgender woman will even be present is often not considered. The, and the notion that transgender women are welcomed is also significantly an issue. And I think that happens, especially women's organizations, and with lesbian organizations, too, that every time I'd go into one, I'd have to wonder, Are they going to view me as a legitimate woman? Are they going to see me as someone who belongs there? Are they going to see me as some kind of interloper who is threatening to the space? And that, especially from people who I would, I don't know, hope would know better or would know what it's like to be discriminated against and know what it's like to have a continuation of it. It can be really hurtful. And I think it cuts off sources of support for me, because I want to go to places, and I want to feel like a part of this group, and I want to be validated. And yet, I have to constantly wonder, "Is this space going to welcome me? Is this space going to be open to me? What's going to happen when I come out?"

Hope discussed her challenges of not having a mentor in her graduate program to discuss social justice activist work:

It's still super hard here for a lot of different reasons. ... I don't have a mentor. I don't have a social justice mentor. There is no one that I can go to that's more senior than me to talk about my goals, to understand my goals. I don't have that. Hands down, I do not have that. Amongst my peers, there are people kind of like my friend who, if I talk to them about issues, they're like, "Oh, yeah. Wow, that's crazy. Blah, blah, blah." Right?

As a faculty member, Maya indicated that having allies "along the way" during a time when she was advocating for a student in her program would have been helpful.

I think it would be more mentorship throughout the process, and so, I sort of felt like I was kind of figuring out as I go and then kind of got blamed after the fact, so, the sexual assault case was not getting a lot of support and mentorship on, like, this is what you might want to think about, this is what you might want to do; but then, after the fact, after I was kind of, advocating for her and went to the student conduct hearing committee and all of this stuff, then I was informed that I did it wrong, or that I was too closely connected, or whatever. I think that would have been helpful, to have more allies along the way.

Sam discussed her frustrations of feeling judged by peers for choosing to add an extra year of graduate school:

I made the decision to take an extra year on campus here so I don't have to be

rushed to take my classes, so I don't have to rush to finish my dissertation; and that was a big deal, because people don't, it's like this rat race, like, who can finish the quickest as opposed to, I am choosing to stay an extra year. ...But in the past, I have gotten the sense that people don't think that I am serious about the program, not faculty, but students, kind of, well, you should be focused over here instead of taking classes over there [Women's Studies Department], but folks don't tend to, or, just self-care in general, you should be as opposed to, good for you, taking care of yourself.

Frida described how self-care is often discussed with students by professors but is not necessarily supported by professors. She described self-care as being “good, it's what we put in our ideal life, but I think that students who spent too much on self-care, professors don't like.” She further elaborated on this thought:

I think faculty members look down on students who take too much time off. It's true, and I think it's, it's happening to me, or it's happened to me. So, I, I'm wondering if everyone experiences that, if everyone sees that. You know, what contributes to that kind of culture. I guess, yeah that's that's, I'm kind of interested in the culture of self-care within psychologists. And specifically, like, counseling psychologists, cause I, I perceive it to be more of a buzz-word than something that we're actually supposed to do.... It's like something people say to, like, you have to prioritize self-care, but what does that actually mean? So, like, when, when a professor says that to me, or like my my supervisor at my prac site said that to me a few weeks ago, that, like, “We should have some more conversations about your self-care and see if you're taking care of yourself.” And then I'm, like, okay we can talk about that, but, like, are you going to make it more possible for me to do self-care? In this environment? I kind of doubt that you are, right?

Experiencing a lack of support from peers, professors, colleagues, or professional organizations poses a threat to activists' self-care. Another challenge that threatens the ability to engage in self-care is cognitive challenges.

### *Cognitive Challenges*

Cognitive challenges involve internal obstacles related to how the individual relates to herself. This specific type of challenge included present moods, such as losing

motivation for self-care due to feeling tired or overwhelmed. Cognitive challenges also involved negative self-talk. Diana discussed cognitive challenges in terms of struggling with self-compassion:

I find that, ya know, I can usually do a pretty good job of, of feeding myself. And I am pretty good about getting regular movement in my life, whether that's, um, walking or doing yoga. So those kind of tangible things come more easily to me, but how I relate to myself, being impatient with myself or hard on myself, is really easy for me to do; it feels really natural and comfortable. And I think I do it sometimes without even realizing how much I'm berating myself for, you know, any number of perceived mistakes or missteps or not doing enough, or that kind of thing; so I think it's just, I find it really challenging, like I value it so much, but it doesn't come, it's not second nature to me to be kind to myself; and yet, I, having read a lot in this area in the last few years, I recognize the value and importance of it, but that's really hard for me.

Many participants discussed feelings of guilt. Maya illustrated how thoughts of engaging in self-care led to feelings of guilt and lack of productivity:

I think it used to be that I was, particularly in the academic life, like, feeling as though I needed to always be working and then feeling guilty if I wasn't; and I had deadlines, but I wasn't getting to them, and so that kind of ever-present, like, nagging feeling that I'm behind. So I think that used to prevent me from doing any kind of self-care, time off, or setting boundaries, which isn't effective, because I think I ended up just avoiding it anyway; so I wasn't really engaging at self-care, and I wasn't doing anything that was giving me energy.

Frida described feelings of guilt related to self-care in connection to physical needs of sleep:

I didn't sleep a lot, and I put everything into it. It was worth it for me in that moment, because I chose it ... But I might not always feel like that. And I hate having to feel the guilt that is associated with, why should I feel guilty for doing what my body tells me I need to do? But I do feel guilty.

Anna discussed feelings of guilt when forced to leave family members after a brief visit:

I could go home for dinner at any point if I really wanted to, but at the same time, if I'm going home for dinner, I might as well just spend the night, because, you know, I know I'm gonna have to drive back in an hour and a half. Or, ... I get

there, and then I feel bad because I haven't seen them in a while, and then I wanna spend even more time with them, but I feel guilty that I have to leave.

She also described herself as being her "own biggest critic":

I think for me, personally, I'm my own biggest critic. My chair has told me that if I ever did anything wrong, she would probably never have to punish me, because I probably would have already punished myself. Not anything weird, but you know what I mean, like I would have already been so upset with myself.

Elizabeth illustrated why finding motivation to engage in self-care is so challenging, given the numerous benefits that come out of self-care practices:

Motivation. Because usually, when you're aware of the fact that you need to be doing something to take care of yourself, it's because you are under stress. And it's either because you have too much to do or you have unpleasant things to do or you have things to do for unpleasant people. I mean, there's usually something negative attached to it or it wouldn't be stressful. And so, so that negative, so when there is something negative attached to it, that's when self-care just becomes really, really challenging. Because you're so tired, and you're just feeling so crappy that it's a challenge just to get yourself, you know, to walk around the block with the dog. I mean, that's crazy; or to make a decent meal for yourself rather than eating popcorn or macaroni and cheese out of the box or whatever, those secret little horrible meals are that many of us will indulge in if we don't have partners to cook for us.

The type of messages that women learn about themselves and about self-care form a set of beliefs and attitudes towards engaging in self-care. When these messages involve negative belief systems, then they pose a threat to engaging in self-care. Such challenges as described by participants are called cognitive challenges. The last challenge underlining the third theme of *Challenges to Self-Care* is the relationship between self-care and privilege.

### *Privilege and Self-Care*

Some participants described the role that privilege plays in self-care. The role of privilege was recognized as a potential challenge to self-care that may or may not have

impacted them, given their awareness of their own privileges. Bad Ass Professor

illustrated how being in a fulfilling career provides her with a sense of privilege that may not be true for other activists:

With my experiences, comes from a place of privilege. So that's what, when I was saying that my self-care related to my work, I feel fulfilled in my career, in my work that I do which leads to myself, it goes hand in hand with my self-care, but that's only because I'm in a place of privilege to do that.

Hope illustrated how owning a pet as one form of self-care is also a privilege:

Okay, so having a pet, too, is a super huge privilege. And I was thinking about this the other day when I was, like, I haven't taken my cat to the vet in, like, a year, because I don't have enough money. I know that's really bad, but having a pet is really expensive. And I know that a lot of people just can't swing an animal, because it's just too much money with food and taking them to the vet, and if they get sick. So again, like I just said, part of my self-care was my animal. And that's privilege right there.

Hope also explained the relationship between privilege, self-care, and activism.

That's why it's kind of like a mind fuck, because in order to be a social justice advocate, you kind of have to be privileged enough to be able to take care of yourself. But actually, when I think about that historically, that doesn't make sense, because, there have been a lot of folks that have, and I'm thinking about, like, the '60s. There were a lot of folks that were protesting and campaigning and that didn't have any type of, but the work wasn't as lonely then. I feel like it's just so complex. But I feel like, right now, to be a social advocate, you do self-care. Privileged self-care is kind of necessary.

Anais also described how the role of being in different positions influences people's level of privilege.

I mean there are people that I have experienced and there are definitely days when I'm like, "As a Black woman, I don't have the privilege to have self-care." Like, that's not something that I have been privileged to do, because I need to take care of everybody, you know. I think my mom feels like that a lot; and I said that to you when she says, "She has a strong Black womanhood." As a Black woman, I don't think she feels privileged to do that; and, in so many ways, she's not wrong. You know, like in so many ways, she's not wrong; and so, as moms, I have a lot of moms who do not feel privileged enough to have the position of having self-care because they have children and they are devoted and they made a choice to be moms.

Virginia indicated that recognizing her privilege influences her willingness to take risks when advocating for transgender individuals.

I will say that part of what pushes me is because I feel like I am in a, a kind of like, a privilege within the privileged set. I am White, I'm middle class, I'm young, I pass or I'm read as female almost always. I'm educated, I have a support system. I have a huge deal of privilege for a transgender woman. And I, and part of that, I think, pushes me to put myself in situations that are dangerous but are not nearly as dangerous for me as they would be for some other transgender woman. And to try to remember that and hold on to that and recognize that with, with that privilege, comes sometimes a responsibility for me.

Khela illustrated how she uses her privilege as a means of conducting social justice.

I think that, however, though what it means to me is that I utilize whatever relative privilege that I have in a situation to bring some type of justice to the situation that is at hand, whether it be like an act, like leveling the playing fields, giving access to resources, bringing out voices of people that are oppressed by some hierarchy, whatever. To me, the social justice piece is utilizing social identities and social parts of myself to essentially help others.

The third theme describing the role of self-care for women activists in counseling psychology was Challenges of Self-Care. This theme incorporates different obstacles described by participants that interfere with engaging in self-care practices. A visual representation of theme 3 is provided in Figure 3. The final theme that underscores the role of self-care for women activists is called Strategies.

#### Theme 4: Strategies

The fourth theme to emerge from the data describing the role of self-care for women activists in counseling psychology involves methods used to overcome challenges in social justice work. These methods are considered self-care because they function to support the social justice work that is so cherished by activists. All participants indicated

that self-care is crucial to their work as social justice advocates. Virginia summarized this concept well by saying “I’ve learned through counseling and through doing social justice work, it’s that, if I don’t take care of myself, then it won’t happen.” Similarly, women activists must overcome challenges and barriers that interfere with social justice work, or the work will not happen.

The following sections describe a variety of methods to overcome social justice barriers. These sections are divided into categories that identify the overall type of approach: Present-Moment Strategies, Connecting and Networking, and Mindful Strategies.

### *Present-Moment Strategies*

Present moment strategies included methods of acting during the present when encountering challenges in activist work, such as when criticized by an audience member while facilitating social-justice-oriented workshops or teaching multicultural courses. Bad Ass Professor illustrated how she overcomes criticism in the moment to continue her work at the present time:

When we’re criticized, we automatically throw up a wall. It’s natural. But then, I’m thinking, “Okay. There’s a reason why this person is criticizing me. I want to know why. And because there’s always a little bit of truth to it, and so what is it?” The key is to pinpoint that. So once I get over myself, you know, just being yourself and go talk with them. And I’ll say, “Okay. Can you explain this? Can you help me understand?” And then like, “Oh! Okay. That makes total sense.” And then I’ll ask for help. I’ll say, “Well, can you help me figure out how to do this different or make this better or improve on it?” And every time I’ve done that, I’ve never had anyone say no or turn me down. And every time I’ve done that, the work that I’ve done has been improved.

She described using the same strategy in cases when people may undervalue her social justice work:

If I had difficulties for someone thinking that, “Oh this kind of work is not valuable or whatever” or “You’re wasting your time, you should be doing research.” If someone ever did that to me, no one has, but if someone ever did that to me, I would still do the same process, sit down and talk with that person and say, “What, really, is the concern about it?” And then say, “Okay. Well, can you help me figure out how I can address these concerns?”

Bear discussed the importance of making a conscious decision in the moment about having interpersonal interactions with members of an audience.

I have a pathological lack of fear about interpersonal interaction; nothing scares me. However, there might be other people there who are at far more risk than you are; and that is the piece where you’re having to look at, even if you know what’s going on. You go, “If I do X, what are some of the likely outcomes? Who else could get hurt?” And you might change; you might decide,” Okay, I’m not going to do this in the moment, but I’m gunna go back.” And I’ve done that before; and that feels much better, because then, I’m the only one at risk, and since I don’t seem to feel risk, it’s okay.

Oftentimes presenters of social justice topics receive comments or questions from attendees that are unexpected and full of ignorance. Responding in a professional manner is not always feasible. Disengaging from the situation in the moment while allowing a co-presenter to take the lead was identified as a helpful strategy. Anna described using this strategy while facilitating a Safe Zone workshop in which an attendee asked a question about supporting LGBT individuals when his religion “says that it’s not okay.” She described his question as coming across in a “curt” manner:

I started speaking, and I found myself saying things along the lines of, “You know, I think, you know, there are some things you need to tease out for yourself; and those are things that, you know, we can’t answer because of the religion.” And I started to find myself getting a little bit flustered, so somebody else stepped in and helped. And then I came back and you know, kinda said... Yeah, so I mean it’s, it’s nice in that manner in that, um, I can tease those out between other people.

Frida illustrated how removing one’s self from situations that provoke emotions is helpful. She identified the cognitive challenge to self-care as well, feeling shame for



experiencing emotions. She described using this strategy during a sexual assault Speak

Out event:

Take Back the Night, and um, we usually do a Speak Out afterwards. ...So, you know, it's, a lot it's a lot of people, mostly women, sharing their experiences of sexual assault. And I had to leave and, like, also kind of do, like, the same thing, and just, like, you know, put myself back together and not feel ashamed about needing that. I think that I sometimes feel a little shame for, like, being an emotional person or being an introvert...

Bear illustrated this strategy by recognizing that it begins with a conscious awareness of how one is feeling in the present moment:

And if I can ... extend that compassion to empathy, that works every time. I can't always do that. I mean, I'm just not perfect, and so I will encounter times. But, and what I've learned from that is that when I, when I get to that place and I know I'm in the place where I can't do that, then I find a way to disengage in a compassionate way and return later. So when I'm really, you know, on, then I can do it... I think really being grounded, being mindful, and being compassionate, those always, always, always worked. And being transparent. Transparency always looks a lot like, "Here's what I'm experiencing right now," and sort of doing it without any heat and no accusation; just putting it out there is a very powerful thing.

Present-moment strategies for overcoming social justice challenges required awareness for how the individual is experiencing herself in the present moment. It also required making a decision to respond in that moment or to respond at a later time. The second category of methods to challenges in activist work was Connecting and Networking.

### *Connecting and Networking*

The strategy of forming connections and networking involved gaining support from additional individuals. As Bad Ass Professor said, "I can't do this alone." This strategy was found to be useful for addressing challenges involving overwhelming

amounts of work that was shared among team members and seeking support or advice when feeling stuck in one's activist work. Strategies included seeking support from mentors and professors. Latalia illustrated how creating a plan with colleagues helps address challenges as an organization:

I mean, if it's an organization, we choose, like, who's going to be the voice. How are we going to go up against this person? So, sort of really sitting back and devising a plan of what are the losses, what are we doing here? All that kind of stuff. How do we want to tackle this; and so, I think intentionality, I guess, would be, what I'm talking about there, is really making a plan and taking into account, like, how it might come across or what other people are, you know, sort of what they might react with or things like that.

Frida discussed how she connected with a peer to form an intervention after recognizing a need to support Muslim students on her university campus:

I collaborated with [name], another second year doctoral student at [name of college], to form an intervention to kind of provide some support for Muslim students who, you know, were experiencing a lot of isolation in the face of this event.

Maya described the use of building coalitions in the community in her efforts to create a resource for the Latino community:

Right now, we're building a center for Latino communities. And so, it's just kind of dreaming and creating what do we need in the community. So, it's making coalition building with the community. But it's really centralized in my roles as an academic.

Person J discussed the importance of "building relationships" when working with vulnerable populations:

When I first tried to work with criminals, my IRB was rejected by the prison. So you find other ways. You build relationships. You let people know you. It might be a matter of them trusting you.

Bear illustrated how being strategic when attempting to change systems in institutions, like university settings, also involves identifying or "knowing your allies":

So, another challenge that I see is who are your allies, who really cares about the issue, and, if you can find someone who is, high enough administrator, or who has access to high administrators in any, it could be an academic institution, it could be a, you know, a business, it could be a nonprofit, it could be anything. Finding a way then to get access to someone who cares or someone who cares and knows other people who they can get to care, so really, being strategic about learning, you know, trying to be strategic about it and understanding a strategy for making change.

Golda also emphasized the importance of identifying allies and forming relationships to “make headway”:

And then, finding allies to do, to actually do the work, is important, Trying to be strategic in your approach is, is also vital. And sometimes that means, again, getting advice from people who have been doing the work for a long time and have been successful, in terms of how to strategize. ... Developing relationships, relationships are also key; if you don't have that, you know, it's very hard to make headway. Though getting people to respect you and like you is important. It's helpful, let's just say it's helpful.

Elizabeth identified two strategies that she created to address challenges of receiving abundant amounts of requests for her time. She called it the “No Buddy” system.

I developed this back when I was at the University of [location], and I taught it to my partner, and we taught it to our friends, and I advocate this a lot when I teach leadership. I call it having a “No buddy,” an N-O buddy. The “no buddy” is the person who you call when somebody is wanting you to do something. Rather than just saying “yes,” which is always typically what I do, I call my “no buddy,” and I talk to that person. It's an old friend of mine whom I've known since graduate school, and I'm her “no buddy.” We check with one another and we talk over with each other whether this is something that really, whether it's something we want to do, whether it's something we should do, is it something that's going to help us, is it going to be something that's going to really make a difference to anybody else, or is it going to be a big time thing,” et cetera. And then I make a decision, um, after I've done that conferring.... The only way that that works is you also have to develop an immediate knee-jerk response to any request that comes your way, um, some knee-jerk response that's comfortable for you. Because the point is you have to get yourself out of immediately saying yes or no, because the point is to just give yourself more time to think about it. So what I typically say, um, the first thing that automatically comes out of my mouth now after a long practice is, “Let me think about that and check my schedule, and I will get back to you.

The second strategy that Elizabeth created involved making sure she awarded herself credit for “shadow jobs” on her curriculum vita. She described shadow jobs as

The term is used for women in academic institutions, particularly women of color, women with disabilities, people who have various integrated identities, multiple aspects of oppressed statuses on which people might depend. And so, the idea is that a shadow job is a job that basically everybody wants you to do, everybody expects you to do, but you don't get recognized for it, you don't get compensated for it. For example, if you're the only African American woman in your department, all of the African American students are going to come to you for mentoring, every single one of them. Because even if they have great advisers that are White and even if those people are nice and everything else, they're going to want to relate to the only other African American in their department. And so, they're all going to want a piece of you, every single one of them, . . . but you're not going to get compensated for that, and you're not going to get any credit for that. And so, you end up doing a lot of unpaid work on the side, and those are called shadow jobs. . . . The problem is that those shadow jobs are often the things that are very appealing to those of us who are interested in social justice goals, because that kind of work is exactly the sort of behind-the-scenes work that does help students stay in school or helps somebody succeed in an organization. And so, you know, . . . you know, one of the interesting things that happened is, once I started doing it, other people started. You know, we would have conversations about various things and somebody would see this on my vita and they'd say, “Wow, I never thought of putting that on my vita.” And I would say to them, “You should put it on your vita. Go back and make a list of all the ones you've done and list those universities on your vita.” Maybe it won't get you more money, it won't get you praise, it won't get you anything. But at least you will have documented all of the service work that you did. I think stuff like that, you know, there's stuff you just kind of, you just have to sort of recognize when you're doing shadow work and figure out a way to somehow claim it so that it doesn't go completely unremarked and invisible.

Networking and forming connections provided sources of support and resources to women activists. The last category of methods is Mindful Strategies.

### *Mindful Strategies*

The third category of methods underlining theme four is Mindful Strategies. This type of strategy involves an awareness of one's mental status and self-talk when expecting to encounter social justice challenges. Unlike present-moment strategies that

involve strategizing during the exact moment of encountering obstacles related to activism, mindful strategies involve preparing in advance or debriefing with colleagues after encountering social justice obstacles. Although there is some overlap among all forms of strategies, mindful strategies include more internal forms of strategies than present-moment strategies, which often involved more external actions taken during the moment. Maya illustrated the use of this strategy through her awareness of her mental state:

I do think that, like, my own sense of emotional stability, I guess, or centeredness and being grounded has helped with that. A lot of what I was saying before about just knowing, like, being able to trust myself and not get wrapped up and confused about, well, is this the right thing to do, because people are saying it's not. Are they're right? I think that's just something that I've worked on personally....It helps a lot in social justice work, especially because I think people have very different comfort levels with confrontation and with advocacy in general. And so, if I were to take on their discomfort, then that would mean I wouldn't act, I wouldn't be active. I think and I'm glad that I didn't do that. So I think it really helped that I was able to stay connected to myself and what I feel like was important for me, so that's been super helpful.

Golda described how using positive self-talk and emanating love and peace for herself and others helped to prepare her for difficult meetings:

I think using techniques that I've learned in yoga, like before meetings or during meetings that I knew were going to be really challenging meetings and trying to breathe through them, and, like, keep my heart open. And that, and, like, think of, like, think of positive emotions, like things I love, emanating love and peace, for myself and the other people in the room, and just, or even meetings that are scary, where you get very panicky or anxious or nervous, and using those techniques, those yoga techniques, again the breathing techniques, the self-talk to, to work through, you know, I'm also, I would say I, I'm courageous, which I never ever said before. So if there is a cause and I feel it's important, and then I, and I feel like I'm the one with the opportunity to speak up and to do something about it, um, I will do it. ... You know, speaking up when you're, even when you're nervous, and your voice is shaking, and I will do that. I will push through.

Ada described how hearing the advice from a friend helped to decrease her distress towards teaching White privilege.

I have to teach about White privilege tonight. I'm so dreading it. And he said to me, he's, like, "Go in there with a spirit of peace and compassion, and you'll be okay." And it was just like this little prayer for me, a meditation in a way. That I went in, and not with the armor, but with the openness; and it made me calm and much better at being in that space.

Having a mindset that certain challenges are likely to occur can help activists feel more prepared. As Bear illustrated, "I expect to find people who are ignorant. I expect to find people who are covertly, say, racist, or misogynist, or homophobic, because that is what is in our world." Golda also described how resistance and backlash are a part of activist work:

You're going to encounter not only resistance, but you know, backlash, fighting back, yes. ... Be ready for that. You can't always predict what that's going to look like, but to be ready. That, and to be prepared for that, to handle that.

Mindful strategies involve understanding one's mindset and related self-talk to overcome adversity in activism. Integrating strategies addressing challenges in the present moment and establishing strong connections and networking also emerged as methods to overcome social justice barriers. These strategies illustrate the fourth theme that emerged from the data describing the role of self-care for women activists, "Strategies." A visual representation of theme 4 is provided in Figure 4. Four themes that explain the role of self-care in the lives of women activists were Relational Support, Influences, Challenges, and Strategies. The following section will describe the relationships among these four themes.

#### Relationships Among Four Themes of Self-Care

Relational Support, Influences, Challenges, and Strategies were four themes that describe forms of self-care for women activists. Each theme is unique, as it represents a

distinct form of self-care with specific defining characteristics. However, the themes also share overlapping features with one another.

The three categories underlying theme four, *Strategies*, are mindful strategies, connecting and networking, and present-moment strategies. Not surprisingly, these three categories are related to categories underlying theme one, Relational Support. For example, the strategies of connecting to others or networking overlap with seeking support from faculty and colleagues in academic environments. In addition, using mindful and present-moment strategies requires a conscious awareness of one's internal reactions, or connection to self. Connection-to-self is an underlying category for Relational Support. The fourth theme, *Strategies*, is also related to the third theme, *Challenges*, in that when challenges related to activism are present, certain strategies must be chosen to address specific challenges. Some strategies will be more effective when addressing certain challenges. In addition, the types of strategies selected by activists may vary by cultural background, access to resources, and connection or lack of connections to mentorship. Thus, the second theme, Influences, is also interconnected to strategies (theme four) and relational support (theme one).

Furthermore, relational support (theme one) may present challenges (theme three) to activist women. For example, *relationships to family members* is one source of support, but it can pose challenges if one experiences a sense of guilt for not visiting for a long period of time (i.e., Anna). Also, group support (theme one) can be a source of self-care for one group of women, but not for all women. For example, Virginia illustrated this concept by describing personal experiences at AWP conference that triggered feelings of hurt as a transgendered woman. As she described, the unwelcoming stance by

people who are supposed to be aware of biases was “hurtful.”

Figure 5 provides a visual model of the four themes illustrating the role of self-care for women activists in counseling psychology. The four themes of self-care are also tied to one another by their affiliation to women and social justice advocacy. This connection is represented by the overarching, all-encompassing theme, Activist Lifestyle.

### Activist Lifestyle

The overarching theme of Activist Lifestyle encompasses all four themes of self-care and their relationships with one another, as illustrated in Figure 1. The role of self-care is ingrained in an activist lifestyle because of the value placed on conducting activist work. Participating in social justice advocacy is an action-oriented characteristic of living an activist lifestyle. Activist Lifestyle also includes living a values-directed life and fulfills an existential purpose. These two areas are further described in the following sections.

#### *Living a Values-Directed Life*

The women discussed their role “wearing many hats” (Anna) as graduate students, psychologists, teachers, therapists, daughters, wives, partners, leaders, and activists. One hat that is not removable is the ingrained values of being a social justice activist. The attitudes, beliefs, and actions of fulfilling an activist lifestyle are infused in everyday roles. Hope described how she views activism as a lifestyle.

First and foremost, it’s a lifestyle. Every day, you have to live it. Like, be ready to say something if you need to say it or do something if you need to do it. And then there is my graduate school career, and then there is my community work, which I . . . . And part of my social justice orientation also calls for me to be involved in



the community. And I've been involved in the community ever since I got in grad school. Even though I'm a single parent and grad school sucks, it's still really important for me to be involved in the community. And I feel that it's enriched me far beyond the time commitment that is required, so I think the end justifies the means.... I would say the other thing about being socially just, living a socially just lifestyle, is you have to be constantly vigilant of your own actions, of other people's actions, of where to pick your battles, of how to fight your battles. It's a constant. I would say it's an intuition process, but there's also a cognitive process that goes along with it every day, every day. That's how it works.

Hope also illustrated how living a values-directed lifestyle appears in her everyday actions.

I'm just very value-driven. ...I mean, making sure that whatever context I'm in or whatever situation I'm in, it's not displacing anyone, it's not disrespecting anyone and, to the best of my ability, is actually advancing someone else or giving someone else dignity or giving someone else pride. That's like the values that I live by, right? I don't live by material. I don't live by capital. I don't live by -- I don't even live by social network goals or values...

Mollie also described social advocacy as related to her values:

It's like a part of, I think, that it's a part of who I am. And it's, I can't imagine doing, doing anything else. Anything other than taking action against things that are not fair. So it's definitely a part of my, a part of who I am. My value system, my personality, my value system, it's a part of them.

Elizabeth described how living a social justice lifestyle involves seeing the world through a specific "lens":

I think of it less like a bunch of tasks that I do and more like just a lens that I bring to everything I do. Like a lens that I look at the world with and view the world from.

Person J also described activism as having a worldview: "It's kind of the world view itself, you know, how you see people."

Ada explained how activism just "fits in to who I am." She described moments of when she is not participating in activism as feeling "numb" and "more disengaged."

Khela also described how she views activism as being ingrained in one's set of values:

I think of any sort of social justice activism or whatever, is that, like, it's really hard to tease apart from people's internal values and what they find, like, value in, what they find for a sense of purpose in.

Virginia illustrated how social justice is a way of "being" and a "vision" for making the world a better place for everyone, including herself:

I have a strong belief that social justice is an all around kind of thing. Like, we can all be liberated or we're all being oppressed. And so, social justice is both a way of being, helping other people, which feels really good. And it's a way of me fighting for myself as well, helping making the world better for me, for people like me, for all people, significantly. Part of really internalizing that message is understanding that I can't just be doing it for other people. I really do have to do it for me. I really do have to do it for all of us. I really do have to have a vision of liberation that says, all of us have to be raised, all of us have to be validated; all of us have to be inspired, affirmed, and valued, and I am one of those people.

Living an activist lifestyle describes a way of existing in the world, a lens for recognizing unjust systems and attitudes of discrimination, and a desire to create a safer world for all individuals. The second characteristic describing an activist lifestyle is experiencing a sense of purpose in life connected to activism.

### *Purpose in Life Connected to Activism*

Living an activist lifestyle is not only about having a set of values that encompasses everyday actions and attitudes, but also includes a connection to feeling purposeful in life. Maya described this purpose as "leaving my stamp on the world:"

I think, seeing that happening in different ways in social justice, for me, like the teaching, I can make change, student to student, or do, like, disseminating research or talking in bigger groups about different issue I think is a way to reach larger masses. I'd like to do more kind of a structural change or systems-level change, and I plan to, but I definitely see my stamp on the world being something related to social justice in some form or fashion.

Golda described her internal reactions when not engaged in social justice activism.

I see that as definitely my life purpose, social justice issues, when I'm not engaging in that, or forced to confront energies that are counter to, it makes me crazy. It makes me very frustrated. Um, I see it as inhibiting progress. You know, I see social justice as making the world a better place, making the world right, yeah. I have a hard, a very hard time with inequities, unfairness, and I'm an only child, err, an older child, I'm not a middle child. But but I have a, a hard time with that. So it's, I feel best when I'm engaged in those activities.

Person J illustrated how feeling “called to solve problems” to specific populations is fulfilling a sense of purpose:

I think we're all here to solve some problem. That's kind of where I go back to, Maybe this is my problem to solve this little area. And so, in one sense, yes, I guess. You know, I've articulated that, that we're wired to solve a problem, something we're drawn to, that maybe other people aren't. For some reason I'm drawn to a certain group of people that quite a bit others may not be. So a lot of people are drawn to other things. Like, I know people who are drawn to human trafficking. That's their social justice issue, and I'm so happy for that. We can't all do everything. And so, we can do that one thing, then we feel very drawn to it, very passionate about that that our unique strengths fit. So yeah, I guess so. I think it does. It really adds to the purpose and meaning in my work.

Diana illustrated how teaching graduate students in counseling psychology is her “calling:”

My life's work is to teach. When I'm teaching and engaged in activism, particularly, again, like of the pedagogical variety. That is, like, infusing enthusiasm and passion and people who otherwise might be apathetic or just again never encounter some of these ideas. It's the most, engaging, exciting, rewarding, fulfilling, part of what I do with my life. It's as close to a calling as I think I'm going to have.

Living an activist lifestyle involves acting from a set of values of respect for one's self and people of all cultural backgrounds. It includes a feeling of purpose and connection to the universe. The following section describes the conceptualization of self-care for women activists in counseling psychology.

### *Understanding Self-Care Related to Activism*

The activist lifestyle is challenging, because it is ingrained in every aspect of living, within relationships to self and others and the lens by which one views the world. The activist lifestyle cannot be turned off or put aside. Therefore, it is crucial that activists engage in self-care throughout their lives. As Maya stated, without incorporating self-care into her life, “I wouldn’t be able to do that work. I think I’d easily get burned out or discouraged, maybe even, or angry at least; so I think I couldn’t do that. I don’t think I could be as effective if I didn’t have self-care strategies in my life or if I wasn’t balanced in that way.”

Bear also illustrated the relationship of self-care to living a values-directed activist lifestyle.

I see this really big picture, and being able to just step back and really stay grounded in who I am and knowing who I am, and that’s something that’s changing my life to live in a way that is values-directed, and it has social justice at its heart, that is self-care. It’s like I know who I am, I know what I believe in, I know where I stand and why I do it, and no one can change that. There’s nothing in the world that can change that and make that different.

### Conclusion

To understand self-care in the lives of women activists is to recognize that taking care of one’s self is a form of activism and is connected to making the world a more fair, just place for all people. Figure 6 provides a visual representation for conceptualizing self-care related to activism.

Table 2: Self-Care Is Multidimensional

	Categories of Self-Care			
Internal Self-Care	Physical	Relational	Spiritual	Mindful
	Connection to Body/	Time Spent Alone / Checking in with Self	Life Purpose / Doing Something Bigger in the World	Self Compassion, Self-Talk / Grounded Feeling
External Self-Care	Fueling the Body / Movement	Time spent with others - Connections to Others (Family, Friends, Colleagues, Organizations) / Internet / Male Support	Religion and Spirituality / Connection to Nature / Earth / Animals	Setting Boundaries / Balance

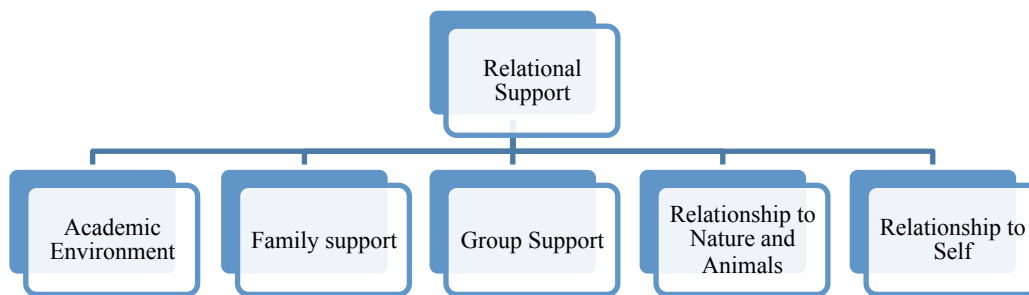


Figure 1: Theme One: Rational Support

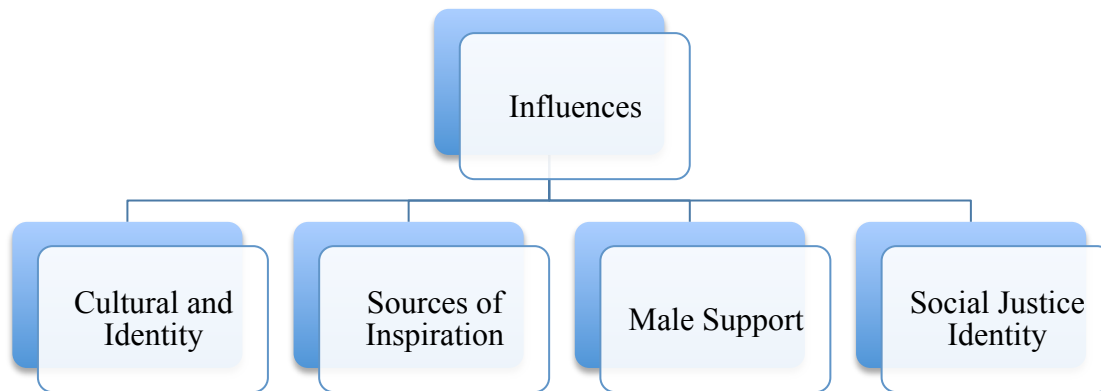


Figure 2: Theme Two: Influences

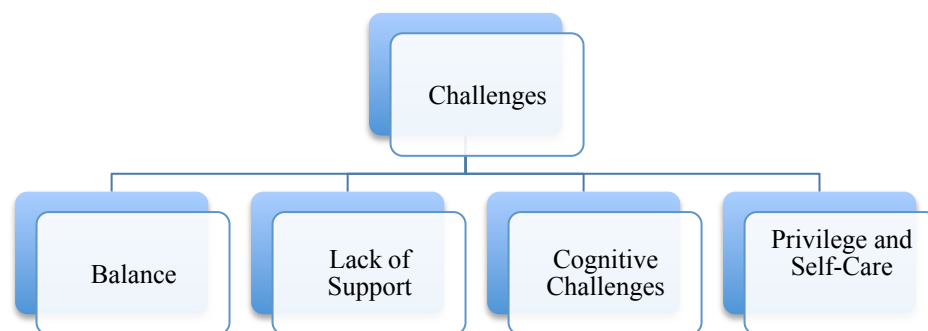


Figure 3: Theme Three: Challenges

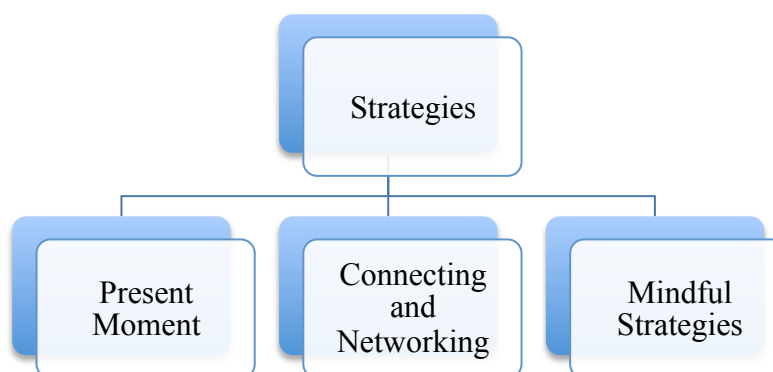


Figure 4: Theme four: Strategies

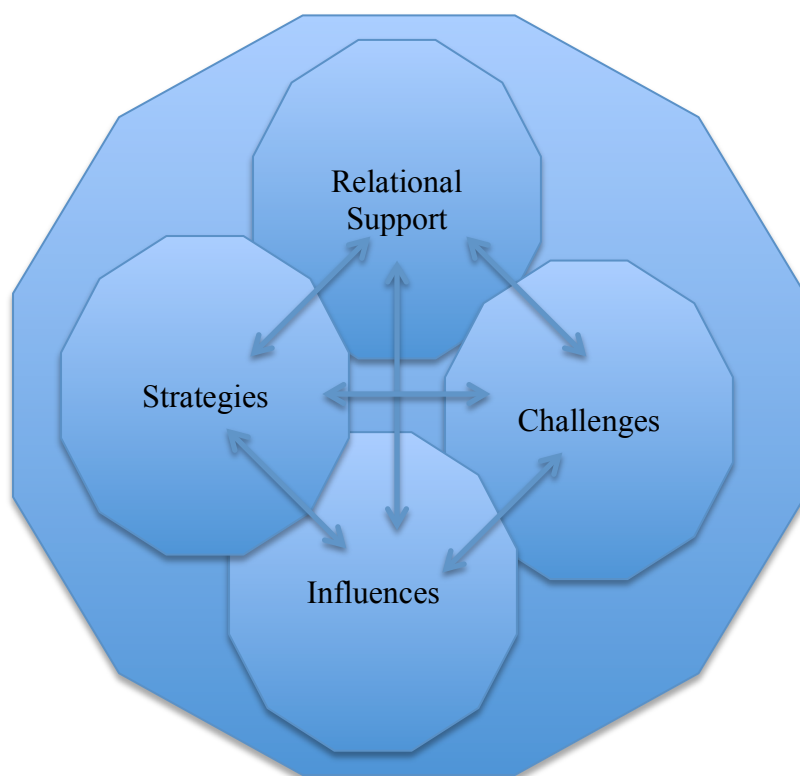


Figure 5: Four Themes of Self-Care

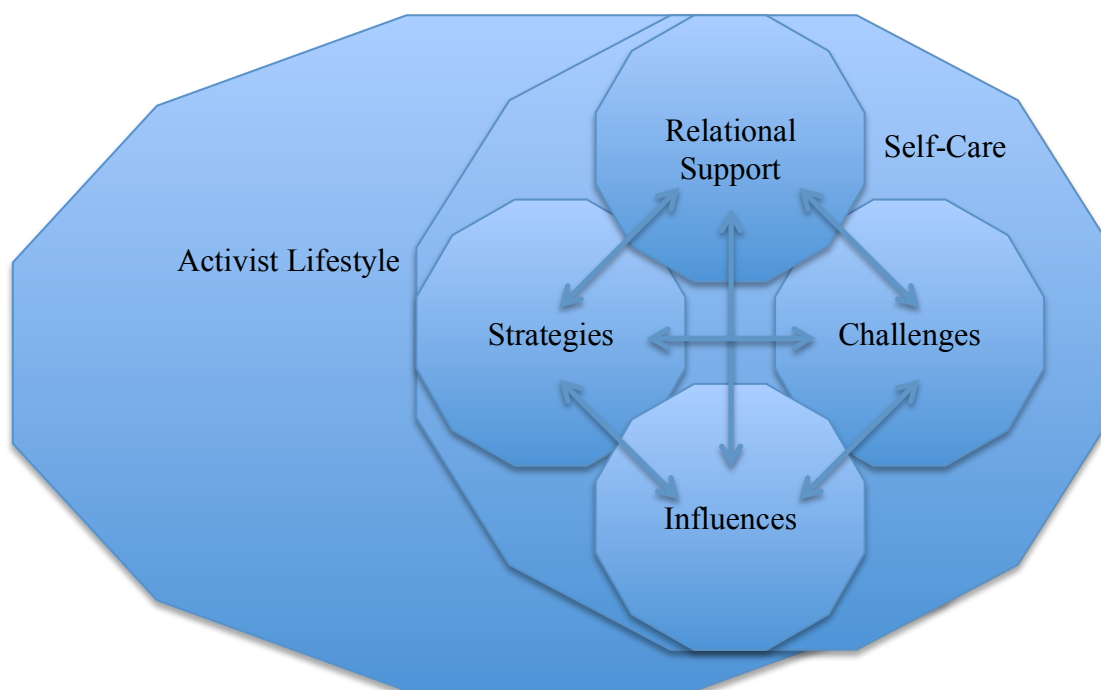


Figure 6: McCadden Model of Self-Care for Women Activists in Counseling Psychology

## CHAPTER IV

### DISCUSSION

#### Summary of Findings

This study addressed the following research questions: 1. How was self-care defined by female psychologists and female graduate students in the field of counseling psychology who were engaged in social justice activism? 2. What types of self-care methods did they identify as helpful in relieving stress and avoiding burnout, and in what ways was stress relieved by incorporating these forms of self-care? 3. What challenges did these women encounter that prevented them from engaging in self-care practices? 4. How were such challenges overcome?

Results of this study suggest that female psychologists and female graduate students in the field of counseling psychology who are engaged in social justice activism and were participants in this study defined self-care as an ongoing learning process that appears different for individuals across their lifespan. In addition, self-care was viewed as a multidimensional concept that addresses physical, social, spiritual and cognitive needs. Self-care was grounded in the idea of *knowing*: the ability to recognize one's needs at a specific moment and choose an effective form of self-care that fits for the unique individual to address her needs.

To relieve stress and prevent burnout in careers and activist work, women in this



study engaged in self-care through external and internal methods addressing physical, social, spiritual, and cognitive needs. External methods of self-care included drumming, creating artwork, yoga stretching, eating healthy foods, socializing, venting, attending church services or spiritual healers, traveling, exercising, and dancing. Internal methods of self-care included positive self-talk, feelings of gratitude, meditation that integrates mindfulness interventions, and listening to sounds of nature. Self-care methods were reported to help women be more effective therapists, students, and parents and to enjoy quality time more efficiently with family and friends. Self-care also prevented burnout by maintaining a sense of balance and enhanced quality of wellbeing for these women. The consensus for the role of self-care in the lives of activist women in counseling psychology was that self-care is difficult to incorporate into daily routines, given numerous challenges encountered on a daily basis.

Women in this study struggled to engage in self-care practices due to difficulty incorporating extra time into busy schedules and balancing family obligations, lacking support networks or feeling unwelcomed by professional organizations, lacking motivation, criticizing self through patterns of negative self-talk, and feeling guilt for engaging in self-care. Owning the identity of a social justice activist was another challenge to prioritizing self-care for one's self, because this population is naturally externally focused on helping to improve the wellbeing of others. The last challenge described by some participants was financial investment in self-care. Self-care practices, such as caring for a pet or traveling, were favorable but costly methods. Such challenges preventing women activists from engaging in self-care were overcome by seeking out supportive relationships (*relational support*) and using resources related to cultural and

identity influences (*influences*).

When encountering obstacles to self-care and adversity in activism, women found support by talking to professors, colleagues, or mentors in academic environments. Forming connections with disciplines outside of counseling psychology, such as the university's women and gender studies department, women's resource center, or counseling center, provided graduate students additional access to mentorship opportunities. In addition to identifying sources of support in academic environments, women also identified sources of support in professional and community-based organizations. Professional organizations identified as sources of support include Division 35, Division 17, the Association for Women in Psychology, and the National Latino Psychological Association. Community-based groups included religious and spiritual groups of people. Sources of support included family members and friends who shared similar attitudes and values related to social justice advocacy work. These connections occurred in person and through online relationships that existed with the help of the Internet. Forming supportive relationships with individuals in university settings, professional and community-based organizations, and family and friends is grounded in the theme *relational support*, which guided participants through obstacles in activism and with self-care strategies.

The theme *relational support* also involved feeling connected to nature and animals. Women identified forms of self-care related to hiking on trails, backpacking in the wilderness, walking beside rivers or streams, sitting or lying near plants and grass, opening windows to let in fresh air, and caring for pets (dogs and cats) as powerful tools of self-care. The benefits of connecting to mother earth provided clearer perspectives and

mindsets, a spiritual connection, innovative sources of energy, feeling calm and peaceful, and experiencing a decrease of emotional arousal. The last form of *relational support* is described as a relationship to one's self.

Women identified methods to overcoming challenges related to activism and poor self-care by empowering themselves through positive self-talk, engaging in self-care methods that lead to feelings of centeredness, recognizing personal limitations, and setting boundaries. Connecting to one's self included a connection to one's body. physical strength, awareness of sleep deprivation, and making efforts to consume healthy foods that nourish the body and were related to knowing one's physical needs. Relational support describes how women activists in counseling psychology overcame obstacles in social justice work and poor self-care by receiving support from individuals, actively connecting to nature, and empowering themselves through self-talk and personal self-growth. In addition to relational support, another form of self-care stemmed from resources related to cultural and identity influences.

Influential resources related to culture and identity incorporated into self-care included religious and spiritual identity, ageing, and social justice identity. Religion and spiritual identity involved having a set of beliefs related to faith in a higher power and / or a feeling of meaning and purpose. Aging influenced self-care by contributing to the learning process of doing self-care, and identifying as a social justice activist contributed to an increased awareness about the importance of maintaining self-care.

In addition to answering this study's four research questions, data from this study also provided an understanding of *activism*, including types of challenges to activism and influences related to identifying as a social justice activist, as well as strategies to move

through obstacles related to social justice work. A conceptual model was created from the study findings to illustrate the relationships of activism challenges, connections, and influences to overcoming challenges to activism and self-care, as well as strategies as they also relate to an activist lifestyle, a new way of discussing activism. The study's findings also strongly suggested that self-care is a form of activism and a powerful tool for social change. The following sections describe the interpretations of these data and their relevance to existing literature.

### Interpretation of Data

Results of the data indicate that these women activists in counseling psychology were deeply committed to social justice work despite encountering micro- meso- and macro-level challenges to activism. Results suggesting connection to self and others and spiritual beliefs as contributing factors to overcoming challenges in activism and self-care are similar to the findings of Wasco, Campbell, and Clark (2002), who identified self-care methods for female activists who support victims of sexual assault. In addition to identifying self-care methods addressing cognitive thoughts (changing one's perspective) and physical needs (exercising), they also identified self-care practices related to social and recreational needs (seeking support from friends or engaging in recreational activities). Although the present study has similar findings to those of Wasco, Campbell, and Clark (2002), the present study describes such similarities as cognitive self-talk as connecting to one's self. This new way of explaining self-care provides another method to comprehend the meaning of self-care.

The results of the present study are similar to those findings by Smith and

Redington (2010), Steinfeldt et al. (2012), and Hagen (2013). Smith and Redington (2010) identified sources of support from colleagues, friends, family members, professors, and partners as means of support for 18 White antiracist activists. Hagen (2013) explored the meaning of social justice among sexual minority women and transgender women. Her results also suggest that connections to individuals such as mentors, professors, or inspirational figures contribute to one's interest in activism. In addition, participants in Hagen's (2013) study identified numerous challenges involved in activist work, such as identifying support within activist communities and feeling overwhelmed by activist work.

Steinfeldt et al. (2012) explored coping strategies for 11 social justice advocates working to eliminate mascots, logos, or nicknames affiliated with Native American cultures. Steinfeldt et al. (2012) identified five coping strategies for advocates: using humor, reframing resistance, avoiding escalation, building alliances, and supportive sharing (Steinfeldt et al., 2012). The present study did not identify the coping mechanism of using humor to cope with stress in activism. One explanation for this difference may be that the present study's interview questions focused on overcoming challenges to self-care, which is most needed during stressful moments. Another explanation may involve sample differences. Participants in the present study were also balancing stresses such as taking courses, conducting therapy sessions, teaching, and supervising.

Steinfeldt et al. (2012) also identified "avoiding escalation" as a coping mechanism. The present study did not identify this coping mechanism but did identify "removing self from situation" as a strategy to addressing challenges in activism. The two concepts are similar in that they both involve recognizing one's internal emotional

reactions during a specific moment. Furthermore, “reframing resistance” (Steinfeldt et al., 2012) and “positive self-talk” from the concept of *connecting to self* in the present study both shed light on changing cognitions or maintaining a strong ego when addressing challenges with activism. Interestingly, none of the participants in the present study mentioned the word “resistance.” This is likely due to the general sense of optimism they shared towards overcoming challenges to their activist work that was highly valued by each participant.

The results of this study also align with findings from studies focused on female leaders. Self-care strategies such as support from family members, friends, and colleagues; spirituality; and exercise were found useful by female leaders in early childhood health and education (Turner, 2010), career women with sensory and physical disabilities (Noona et al., 2004), and highly achieving Black and White career women (Richie, Fassinger, Linn, Johnson, Prosser, 1997). The similarities across studies, including the present study, suggest that relationships provide a sense of safety, validation, and empowerment for ambitious career and activist women.

Turner (2010) also found women engaging in self-care by starting a women’s support group for women in similar leadership positions. One explanation for why women find comfort within other groups of women is because of shared experiences. As a stigmatized group, women experience psychological distress from external and internalized forms of oppression of living in a patriarchal context (APA, 2007). Therefore, seeking support and validation from other women presents less threat of ridicule or judgment of personal struggles being blamed on one’s gender. This is not to say that men cannot be supportive. In the present study, *male support* was recognized

under the theme *Influences* because of the positive support men offered to women activists in this study. These men included spouses, peers in graduate school, and online friends conducting similar forms of activism. They provided emotional support and / or resources for conducting social justice work. Recognizing men as supportive allies to women activists is vital to understanding how members of a dominant culture can be a part of the solution to empowering marginalized or stigmatized populations.

Another finding that emerged from the data is related to graduate students hearing mixed messages of self-care, a “buzz word” often valued in conversations between students and professors or supervisors, but subtly unsupported when enacted by students. Perhaps Jack’s (1991, 1999, 2011) Silencing The Self theory can describe the distress experienced by female graduate students who value self-care but feel unsupported by their programs. The Silencing the Self theory was created after Jack (1991) listened to the “moral language in depressed women’s voices,” (Jack, 2011, p.524). Jack argued that,

Because establishing positive, close connections is a primary motivation throughout life, cognitive/relational schemas about how to make and keep attachments are critical for understanding depression. Depressed women’s relational schemas reflect a set of attachment behaviors (such as self-sacrifice, self-silencing, and pleasing) that have evolved through centuries of women’s subordination to men. Such behaviors were designed to solve the puzzle of how to achieve intimacy within inequality. These cognitive schemas about how to create and maintain safe, intimate relationships lead women to put others’ needs first and to silence certain feelings, thoughts, and actions.” (Jack, 2011, p. 524)

Although the present study does not focus on depression in women, some of the graduate students discussed feeling distressed when encouraged to engage in self-care while balancing busy schedules of writing papers, providing therapy, teaching courses, conducting research, and doing activist work. It is possible that, in order to maintain healthy connections in relationships that are unequal, such as those to superiors, graduate

students sacrifice self-care, engage in self-silencing by not outwardly revealing their frustration with their programs, or experience a “divided self” (Jack, 1991). The divided self occurs when women experience internal anger and frustrations but outwardly attempt to appear pleasing (Jack, 1991). Jack (1991, 1999) described this experience as “over time, the self-negation required to bring herself into line with schemas directing feminine interpersonal behavior” results in low self-esteem and a feeling of “loss of self” (Jack, 2011, pp.524-525). Rather than experiencing self-negation with schemas directing feminine interpersonal behavior, I wonder if graduate students in psychology programs experience frustrations with balancing expected schemas directing *student* interpersonal behaviors. Graduate students are expected to handle the demands of coursework and learn how to become therapists, researchers, and sometimes teachers. To what extent do they feel obligated to sacrifice self-care in order to appease faculty members so as not to appear incompetent or critiqued as failures? How is their self-esteem impacted by these sacrifices? More research is needed to better understand the fit of the Silencing the Self theory to the lived experiences of male and female graduate students.

### Implications of Findings

The present study provides additional perspectives for understanding self-care. Researchers need to view self-care not only as a practice or method, but also as a learning *process* that changes as people mature and enhance their understanding of physical, social, mental, and spiritual needs. The current literature on self-care varies. A two-stage analysis of 139 definitions of self-care presented between 1970 through 2010 by Godfrey et al. (2011) identified self-care as “deliberate care performed throughout life; to promote



or improve general wellbeing and mental health, and cope with illness or disability; self-care includes social support and provides the continuity of care necessary to maintain wellbeing” (p. 12). The present study adds to these definitions by showing how self-care is a strategy or skill that must be learned, oftentimes not until it is most crucial (i.e., in graduate school). Learning how to engage in self-care involves an understanding of one’s physical, spiritual, relational, and mental needs. Self-care is not a fixed concept that is static in time. Effective self-care practices at age eight, for example, look different by age eighteen, when the individual has matured into her teenage years and has interests in romantic relationships. Types of self-care for this same individual will change with life-alternating milestones such as having children or caring for elderly parents. In another example, an injured athlete may be forced to change methods of self-care to accommodate injuries. She may also choose antidepressant medication to alleviate distress as a new form of self-care. By conceptualizing self-care as a process rooted in learning and knowing, future research on self-care can explore the dynamics interfering with or supporting self-care practices.

The study also adds to the literature by enhancing the understanding of activism through the new term, *activist lifestyle*. This term refers to the ways in which social justice activists are constantly aware of living in an unjust world. They see out of a social justice lens throughout their work and relationships, where they are sensitive to micro-aggressions. They believe that their work as activists is never done, because the world is not a safe place for all individuals. Their existence on earth is connected to making the world a better place, and so they wear a suit of armor ready for battle against homophobic, racial, sexist, or systematic biases at all times. The activist lifestyle cannot

be changed because of the knowledge that these activists hold about the world, including their positions in the world. Therefore, they recognize that, despite encountering internal and external struggles in self-care, caring for themselves is vital to continuing the work of activism. Audre Lorde, civil rights activist and feminist, said, “Caring for myself is not self-indulgence, it is self-preservation, and that is an act of political warfare” (Lorde, 1988). Indeed, the *activist lifestyle* is seen among women from the first, second, third, and current generations of activists.

### Limitations

This study has a few limitations that warrant attention. The first limitation relates to the sample of this study. Women who worked in the mental health field created the definition of self-care for this study. Understanding additional insights from individuals in other disciplines such as the medical, teaching, law, and business professions will expand the conceptualization of self-care. Men were also excluded from participating in this study, which left out another perspective to understanding self-care. Male activists may encounter similar or different obstacles to self-care when compared to women. Men of color, as well as gay / bisexual transgender men who conduct social justice work, may provide unique insights into the role of self-care that they experience as marginalized populations with male privilege.

A second limitation to this study relates to privilege. Women in this study were privileged as highly educated women. As a result of their education and training in mental health, they were cognizant of psychological terminology used to describe mental wellbeing and challenges. They were also granted access to resources through their

affiliation to university settings. Such resources included connections to other educated people with mental health training backgrounds, women of color in faculty positions, university gyms, and office / study space with technology. Self-care practices may appear different for activists not trained in mental health or who have no designated space to conduct activist work. In addition to having sharp minds and access to resources, these women conducted types of social justice work that did not threaten their careers or health. Self-care practices may look different for activists whose work involves daily risks to their careers or health and wellbeing.

A third limitation is that all participants were from the United States of America, and most activist work was conducted within the United States. Perspectives on self-care may appear different to activists living in less affluent countries. Furthermore, countries that impose strict gender norms limiting women's participation in communities may impact self-care practices.

A final limitation is a result of time restraints. Due to time issues, the results of this study have not been discussed with participants at this time. Although the results are rooted in the experiences and language of participants, qualitative methodology usually includes conversing with participants about findings. Such conversations offer more insights to the researcher, because participants provide input on how the findings fit or do not fit with their lived experiences. Participants are also welcome to learn about the findings for their own benefits and interests. I am planning to contact participants with this information in the near future.

### Future Directions

Despite these limitations, this study contributes new data to the literature on self-care and activism for counseling psychologists and graduate students. The findings add to the literature on stress and burnout for mental health professionals. They provide a richer understanding to the process of self-care and challenges associated with conducting social justice work as a mental health professional. Future research would do well to explore the role of self-care for women activists who, like Malala Yousafzai (Yousafzai, 2013), risk their lives to support women's rights to education and free speech. Research addressing the role of self-care in the lives of male and female social justice activists who are not affiliated with psychology would also extend the understanding of self-care practices for social justice activists.

Not all graduate students felt supported by their programs for choosing to conduct social justice work outside of program requirements or for engaging in self-care methods. Given that all participants were affiliated with a university or college, these data highlight the importance of university settings creating cultures that support self-care practices and value social justice work conducted by graduate students and faculty. Future research should explore how some graduate programs in counseling psychology either do not incorporate social justice philosophies into curriculum or give lip service to such philosophies without providing training or opportunities for their students to develop as social justice activists. Although graduate programs in psychology often focus on training multiculturally competent therapists, this is different from focusing on training social justice activists. Future research is needed to understand the ways in which social justice philosophies are infused into certain graduate programs and how they are missing among

other graduate programs, as well as ways to bridge this gap.

In addition to supporting students and psychologists on an individual level, research needs to identify changes that must occur at systematic levels to support students and psychologists with self-care. If the American Psychological Association is placing demands on academic programs to push students through their programs, then faculty are forced to place pressure on students to graduate under a specific time limit. These pressures may appear as requiring students to enroll in more courses than students feel comfortable taking on during their first two years of graduate school, rushing through research projects, or putting aside social justice activism, community services, or self-care to prioritize academic demands. Indeed, nontenure faculty members are also impacted by the demands of the American Psychological Association. If achieving tenure status is required for job security and prioritizes publications over service, then nontenure faculty members are continually exposed to career circumstances that do not support activist work or self-care. I am not suggesting that individuals avoid taking responsibility for their own wellbeing. Rather, to understand and change the challenges associated with self-care for psychologists, a critical analysis needs to examine those policies in place at the systematic levels.

Lastly, children need to learn self-care practices to manage stress and peer pressure. Teenagers should be equipped to tolerate peer rejections and uncomfortable emotions that may lead to drug use, violence, or sexual misconduct. Training in methods to care for one's physical, mental, emotional, spiritual, and social needs must begin at an early age in schools, homes, sport teams, and clubs to foster positive thinking and distress tolerance. Incorporating age-appropriate lessons on self-compassion and compassion

towards people of different backgrounds into elementary schools may reduce the prevalence of violence and negative attitudes towards marginalized populations.

## APPENDIX A

FEMALE MEMBERS OF AMERICAN PSYCHOLOGICAL  
ASSOCIATION (APA) OR WOMEN LISTED IN  
PSYCHOLOGY IN *AMERICAN MEN OF*  
*SCIENCE (AMS)* BY 1966

	American Men of Science	American Psychological Association	Date Joined APA
Adams, Elizabeth		APA	1905
Allen, Jessie Blount	AMS		1906
Bagley, Florence MacLean Winter	AMS		
Calkins, Mary Whiton	AMS	APA	1893
Case, Mary Sophia	AMS		
Franklin, Christine Ladd	AMS	APA	1893
Gamble, Eleanor Acheson McCulloch	AMS	APA	1898
Gordon, Kate	AMS	APA	1905
Hamlin, Alice Julia	AMS	APA	1896

## Appendix A Continued

McKeag, Anna Jane	AMS	APA	1899
Moore, Kathleen Carter	AMS	APA	1904
Norsworthy, Naomi	AMS	APA	1905
Prichard, Margaret S.		APA	1905
Puffer, Ethel Dench	AMS	APA	1898
Rousmaniere, Frances H.		APA	1906
Rowland, Eleanor Harris	AMS	APA	1905
Shinn, Milicent Washburn	AMS		
Smith, Margaret Kiever	AMS	APA	1902
Smith, Theodate Louise	AMS	APA	1905
Squire, Carrie Ranson	AMS		
Talbot, Ellen Bliss		APA	1899
Thompson, Helen Bradford	AMS	APA	1902
Washburn, Margaret Floy	AMS	APA	1894
Williams, Mabel Clare	AMS	APA	1907

(Scarborough & Furumoto, 1987, p. 134)



## APPENDIX B

### DEMOGRAPHICS FORM

#### Personal Information

Thank you for agreeing to take part in this research! The following information will help me to better understand the information that you and other participants share with me:

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Pseudonym: \_\_\_\_\_

Please provide the following information:

1) Age: \_\_\_\_\_

2) Race(s)/ Ethnicity(ies): \_\_\_\_\_

3) Gender Identification: \_\_\_\_\_

4) Sexual Orientation Identification: \_\_\_\_\_

5) How do you identify your socioeconomic status (SES):

a. Growing Up? \_\_\_\_\_

b. Currently? \_\_\_\_\_

6) Highest Educational degree obtained: \_\_\_\_\_

7) Country of Origin: \_\_\_\_\_

8) Current Citizenship: \_\_\_\_\_

9) Current geographic location (State if in U.S., otherwise country:

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Thank you! Please return to Elizabeth McCadden via email:

[elizabeth.mccadden@utah.edu](mailto:elizabeth.mccadden@utah.edu) or mail to: 919 University Village. Salt Lake City, UT  
84108

## APPENDIX C

### RECRUITMENT FLYER

#### **Women Counseling Psychological Social Justice Activists and Self-care: A Qualitative Study**

**Elizabeth P. McCadden, Principal Investigator  
University of Utah Counseling Psychology Program**

I am writing to recruit participants for a qualitative, interview-based study exploring the role of self-care for female counseling psychologists and female graduate students in counseling psychology programs who have engaged in or are currently engaged in conducting social justice work. This study is being conducted by Elizabeth P. McCadden at the University of Utah under the supervision of her advisor, Dr. Sue Morrow, to fulfill the dissertation requirements of a graduate program. This study will explore the role of self-care to provide insights on effective methods to manage stress and prevent burnout for women pursuing social justice work.

The literature on social justice is just beginning to explore the experiences of counseling psychologists dedicated to advocacy and social justice work, specifically at the systemic levels (Caldwell and Vera, 2010; Norsworthy, Abrams, & Lindlau, 2012). Understanding the obstacles faced by current counseling psychologists will offer insights for preparing future generations of counseling psychologists who wish to conduct work in the social justice domain. The current study will offer insights into the challenges and barriers faced by women engaged in this work. By exploring the lives of women in counseling psychology who have contributed to progressive social change, this study will also provide insights into the meanings of self-care and the ways women activists in counseling psychology care for themselves in the midst of stressful academic, professional, and activist lives.

Individuals who meet the following criteria are invited to participate in this important study:

- Self-identify as female
- Have obtained a doctorate degree in Counseling Psychology or are currently enrolled in a counseling psychology doctoral program
- Are currently conducting work in the social justice domain or have previously conducted social justice advocacy work.

Participation will consist of the following:

- Completing a one-page form identifying demographics
- An initial 60-90 minute interview by phone, Skype, Facetime, or in person asking about your social justice activism and your self-care perspectives and activities;
- One to two months later, a 30-minute follow-up interview to clarify any additional points;
- A final 30-minute interview, when I will share my emerging results and ask for your feedback.

If you would like additional information about this study, please contact Elizabeth McCadden at [elizabeth.mccadden@utah.edu](mailto:elizabeth.mccadden@utah.edu). You can also reach me at 314-606-8082 or 801-587-5018.

This study has been reviewed and approved by the Institution Review Board at the University of Utah (IRB # 00069887).

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth P. McCadden, M.A.  
University of Utah

## APPENDIX D

### INFORMED CONSENT

#### Consent Document

##### **BACKGROUND**

You are being asked to take part in a research study. Before you decide, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully. Ask me if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether you want to volunteer to take part in this study.

The purpose of the study is to explore the role of self-care in the lives of female counseling psychologists and female graduate students in counseling psychology programs who are or have previously been engaged in social justice activism. This study aims to provide insights on effective methods to prevent burnout from social justice activism and to enhance self-care for women engaged in social justice work. This study will extend the literature on coping with various forms of stress associated with being a woman in counseling psychology who is conducting social justice work.

##### **STUDY PROCEDURE**

This is a qualitative study that will involve a 60-90 minute semi-structured interview conducted by the principal investigator through the use of telephone, Skype, Facetime, or face-to-face. As part of this study, you will be asked to participate in a second, 30 minute follow-up interview, approximately 1-2 months after the first, for the purpose of confirming or adding to information from the initial interview, and a final 30 minute interview several months later in which I will share the emerging results with you and ask for your feedback. Interview questions include semi-structured, follow-up, and clarification questions. Questions will be asked about your self-care practices, background in social justice, and demographic information.

##### **RISKS**

The risks of this study are minimal. You may feel upset thinking about or talking about personal information related to your social justice work, obstacles, self-care practices, or other areas of your personal life. These risks are similar to those you experience when engaging in the same activity outside of a research setting.

## **BENEFITS**

There are no direct benefits for taking part in this study. However, I hope that your participation will contribute to a greater understanding of self-care practices for female social justice activists in the future.

## **CONFIDENTIALITY**

I will keep all research records that identify you private to the extent allowed by law. The interviews will be recorded for transcription purposes and then transcribed into Word documents. The recordings will be stored on a password protected computer or on a recorder that will be stored in a locked file cabinet. Individuals engaged in the transcription process will include the primary researcher and possibly additional transcribers who will be held to the same standard of confidentiality as the researcher. To ensure your personal identity remains private, you will be asked to create a pseudonym. Your pseudonym will be associated with your responses from the interviews and within publications. All records and documents will be stored on computers protected with passwords and external hard drives. All external hard drives and audio recordings will also be stored in a locked filing cabinet. However, if you disclose information that gives study staff a reason to believe that a child or disabled or elderly adult has been subjected to abuse or neglect, study staff will report that information to Child Protective Services, Adult Protective Services, or the nearest law enforcement agency to the extent required by law.

## **PERSON TO CONTACT**

If you have questions, complaints, or concerns about this study, please contact Beth McCadden at 314-606-8082 or email at [elizabeth.mccadden@utah.edu](mailto:elizabeth.mccadden@utah.edu). Please remember that email communication is not a confidential means of communication and emails may not be received within 24 hours. If you have concerns you feel you cannot share with the principal investigator, please contact the faculty sponsor of this study, Dr. Susan Morrow, at [sue.morrow@utah.edu](mailto:sue.morrow@utah.edu) or 801-581-7148.

**Institutional Review Board:** Contact the Institutional Review Board (IRB) if you have questions regarding your rights as a research participant. Also, contact the IRB if you have questions, complaints, or concerns which you do not feel you can discuss with the investigator or her advisor. The University of Utah IRB may be reached by phone at (801) 581-3655 or by e-mail at [irb@hsc.utah.edu](mailto:irb@hsc.utah.edu).

**Research Participant Advocate:** You may also contact the Research Participant Advocate (RPA) by phone at (801) 581-3803 or by email at [participant.advocate@hsc.utah.edu](mailto:participant.advocate@hsc.utah.edu).

## **VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION**

Research studies include only those individuals who choose to take part in the study. You can tell me that you do not want to be in this study. You also have the option of starting the study and then choosing to stop the study at a later time. This will not affect your relationship with the investigator or result in any other negative consequences.

**COSTS AND COMPENSATION TO PARTICIPANTS**

There are no costs or compensation to participants of this study.

**CONSENT**

By participating in this interview, you are giving your consent to be enrolled in this search study.

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